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ABSTRACT

This document is a series of short papers (47) on topics of interest to community college instructors and practitioners. The topics covered in the papers include: study and writing tips for students, teaching strategies and tips, descriptions of innovative programs, using technology in teaching and learning, interacting with students, and institutional effectiveness. The majority of the papers deal with the teaching and learning function, teaching effectively, and the use of technology in the classroom. Titles include: (1) "Teaching in Chunks: Promoting Integration of Concepts" by Penny Zahl; (2) "A Teacher Writes to His Students: Top Ten Tips For Tackling Tenacious Tasks" by Al Trujillo; (3) "Rethinking a Scientific Assignment" by Tricia A. Reichert; (4) "Finding New Syllabi" by Wayne Gilbert; (5) "A First-Semester Learning Community for Adult Women" by Diane Horwitz; (6) "Concurrent Enrollment: A Strategy to Meet Urban Educational Needs" by Brian G. Chapman; (7) "Technology of Humanity: Instilling High Tough in High Tech Departments" by Earl R. Dodrill; (8) "Combining Literature and Technology" by Phyllis Gleason; (9) "On Treating Students as Adults" by Richard A. Baker; (10) "Learning Styles across the College" by Diane Cheatwood; (11) "The Brown Paper Paste-Up Analysis: An Institutional Effectiveness Model" by Miriam M. Baker; and (12) "Managing It All: A Systematic Approach for Allied Health Programs." (LD)

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Susan D. Roueche, Editor

National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development
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College of Education
University of Texas at Austin

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Volume XXII, Number 1

NISOD INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

Published by the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) • College of Education • The University of Texas at Austin

A TEACHER WRITES TO HIS STUDENTS: TOP TEN TIPS FOR TACKLING TENACIOUS TASKS

Successful students aren't just "smart." They employ a variety of strategies to learn new information effectively. Using the following list of study tips will help you succeed in this class, as well as in many others. You will probably not need to use them, but take your pick, be prepared to put in some time and effort, and happy studying.

1. Attend class regularly: I spend a large amount of class time showing visual aids (slides, videos, overheads, demonstrations, and physical models). You must attend class to take advantage of this teaching technique. Make sure that you complete the video worksheets and take notes on what you see in class because this information will be on the exams. We cover something important every single class meeting.
2. Prepare daily (even Friday!): Make no mistake about it, school is hard work. To be successful, you need to prepare before class and analyze information soon afterward. Make sure that you come to class prepared.
3. Take detailed notes: Try paraphrasing (taking notes in your own words). Don't just copy what is on the board—take copious notes on what was discussed, what slides were seen, what you learned from a video, etc. Leave room to add information from other sources (e.g., the textbook) later.
4. Recopy your notes: Many students are convinced that this is the most effective technique. At the very least, go over your notes nightly and use a magic marker to highlight the most important points.
5. Read the book: Especially read the parts that I emphasize. Mark in your book (this does not decrease the resale value of your book...tearing out pages does that!). I suggest reading the book three times!
   - Scan it once briefly before the topic is discussed in class so that you know a little bit about the topic.
   - Read it in detail after the topic is discussed in class, and highlight all important parts (these portions can also be transferred to your notes).
   - Before the exam, reread the highlighted portions of the text.
6. Use flash cards: List a key word on the front and write a definition or explain a process or concept on the back. They are great study guides at test preparation time!
7. Allow ample time to study: This technique prevents cramming the night before an exam. For each hour in class, at least three hours outside of class are usually necessary for proper study time—more if science is difficult for you.
8. Earn extra credit: Take full advantage of opportunities to do extra credit assignments. Extra credit points will be added to your point total at the end of the semester and may allow you to get that next highest grade.
9. See a tutor: Available free-of-charge at the tutoring center, tutors have been selected from past classes based on their academic performance and their ability to explain concepts. Many of our tutors are considering teaching as a career and are there to help you.
10. Here's the best one: Join a study group. Recent studies document the effectiveness of study groups. They work because you have to explain concepts to someone else. If you don't know it, you can't explain it (it's as simple as that). I recommend meeting once a week to go over notes and to quiz each other.

There is no doubt about it: THESE TIPS REALLY WORK!

Al Trujillo, *Associate Professor, Earth Sciences*

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THE SENTENCE GAME

The Sentence Game helps prepare students for writing error-free papers. The class is divided into equal teams. Two students with the highest test scores to date serve as moderator and scorekeeper, and earn five points toward their final participation grades.

Each team selects a captain to serve as spokesperson; the moderator is informed of the name of each captain. The captain (with the group's input) decides the order in which turns will be taken before the game begins. The captains consult and determine which team will go first in the Sentence Game.

1. Each team begins with six points.
2. The moderator randomly selects a sentence from a container holding 25 sample sentences and gives it to the first player. (The team determines the order of players, but every team member has to receive and respond to a selection.)
3. After reading the selection, the team member elects to rewrite the sentence on the blackboard or to purchase a "problem definition" or "team huddle" for two points, with the agreement of the team captain (points are subtracted from the team score).
4. The team member writes the corrected sentence on the board.
5. At this point, the other team (through the captain) can decide to challenge the sentence.
6. If the sentence is not challenged, the judge can signal to the scorekeeper if a point has been earned.
7. Each correct sentence is worth one point to the individual score and one point to the team score.
8. If there is a challenge, the captain of the opposing team is to write the team's new sentence on the board after huddling with team members. If it is deemed successful by the judge, two points are awarded to the team score. If the challenger fails, the original team gets an extra point added to the team score.
9. If the sentence is not challenged and not correct, no points are given; it is presented to the next player on the team and so on until a correct response is written; then another teams begins play.
10. Play continues until rewrites of all the sentences in the container are made or the judge determines the game is over. If the judge decides to end the game, she has to say "last sentence" and allow each team one more sentence.

Each student's total points are added to his or her final participation grade. The team points can be divided equally among team members or distributed as the team decides. However, all team members have to agree to the distribution; the captain has to put the decision in writing and pass it to the judge. These points are added to final participation grades. The winning team is awarded a bonus of one point per player.

There are frequent challenges to rewrites. Typically, opponents challenge and try to rewrite even before a sentence is written. I am impressed with the liveliness and the newfound pleasure students have in working with the language! Evidently, having the opportunity to add points to their final grade gives them important motivation. Practice in working as a team is another excellent outcome. Everyone's effort counts.

Students have been imprinted far more deeply with game shows than with texts. This game works as an interesting and effective instructional strategy.

Peggy L. Curry, *Associate Dean, Off Campus Instruction*

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Volume XXII, Number 2

NISOD INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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"TEACHING IN CHUNKS": PROMOTING INTEGRATION OF CONCEPTS

My students frequently find it difficult to transfer information presented in the classroom to practice in the field. When I use the lecture method to deliver information, students' passive role makes them less alert, reduces their comprehension, and decreases the chances that they can make future applications. Students are most attentive when they are in a setting which is stimulating, changing, novel, or motivating. It is for this purpose that I recently began using a technique called "teaching in chunks."

Teaching in chunks has been promoted as a means of breaking up a class period into manageable, and more meaningful time-blocks of activities. This technique may be used to gauge the number of topics hat can be covered in a given time period and still keep students' attention. By breaking an hour into three to four "chunks" and presenting one or two concepts per chunk, the instructor can be reasonably sure that he or she is progressing at a good pace. To keep students' attention and promote learning, students must be involved and provide feedback.

I applied the "teaching in chunks" technique during a 2 1/2 hour lecture, to 17 nursing students, about how to care for individuals with musculoskeletal disorders. I provided information chunks in approximately 10-to-20-minute segments. The students then had 2-to-5-minutes to organize their notes, collaborate with classmates, and/or research major points in their texts. I provided these written guidelines which served as ground rules:

- stay in room
- use quiet voices
- relocate in room if necessary
- share experiences
- discuss clinical application
- research in text
- discuss questions
- highlight main points.

During my trial of the "chunking" technique, I assessed my students' prior and subsequent knowledge through a matrix-type tool. Students recalled more content and understood more of the primary concepts than had former students responding to my traditional lecture format. Positive comments included: "I had an opportunity to compare my notes with my classmates'," "I felt less rushed," and "Providing information in shorter segments made it easier to understand and remember." Students also reported that they felt the technique helped them remember and study the content in a more organized fashion, that concepts presented in this style were easily compared and interrelated. However, one student said that she would have preferred previous knowledge of the content that was to be covered in each of the blocks; another felt that a less structured environment during the minutes allocated for review would have been helpful.

While the responses to my trial of teaching in chunks were mixed, I plan to continue to experiment with this technique and refine it for future lectures.

Penny Zahl, *Instructor, Associate Degree Nursing*

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LESSONS ON SERVICE LEARNING

Mentioning *service learning* to faculty typically draws this confused and burdened response, " What is service learning and why do I have to do it?" As the service learning coordinator for my college, I hear these words and instinctively gear up for battle. I immediately prepare to attack on the grounds that service learning is not *just* community service and draw my pedagogical sword to defend to the death the importance of learning by doing. I stand, ready to fight for service learning as the "be all to end all" method for teaching—not to mention the only way to total educational fulfillment.

Although I have lost many battles, I have continued on about why one should do service learning, how it could make both your life and teaching career more rewarding...blah, blah, blah.

It is obvious now why faculty buy-in remained low. I was professing, not teaching. I realized this when an unexpected ally—a math instructor—came to my rescue. After discovering that math instructors are among the hardest to reach when it comes to service learning, her comment was received as a great gift.

"It's not that I am opposed to the concepts of service learning, I just need someone to *teach me how* to make it work in my classroom."

Amid the fury of the debate that instructors have been engaged in for years about whether or not service learning is a valid teaching tool, perhaps we have forgotten to employ its basic tenants within our own faculty communities. By giving faculty concrete methods, not abstract concepts, for service learning, they are able to participate in the process of incorporating service learning into their classrooms.

It occurred to me that the key to reaching more faculty members might be to offer instructional, rather than informational venues on service learning. Therefore, I designed a series of three "hands-on" workshops.

#1 Explaining Service Learning

This workshop allows faculty to explore service learning as a new or different teaching method for their courses. Faculty are asked to brainstorm service learning project ideas that would fit their course content. Then, they are asked to exchange ideas and work together on constructing different ways to implement service learning into their courses.

#2 Doing Service Learning

This workshop assists faculty in designing a syllabus that integrates the service learning option. It also instructs faculty about how to utilize the service learning coordinator, the service learning website, and other resources provided by the college and the community.

#3 Expanding Service Learning

This follow-up workshop provides opportunities to troubleshoot problems; learn about new ideas for expanding existing projects; or initiate a service learning project for themselves/colleagues.

Faculty participation and understanding have increased, and "peace time" has had its benefits. However, students will be the greatest beneficiaries and, ultimately, will teach us by their service learning experiences.

Darilyn Carroll, *Service Learning Coordinator, and Instructor, Behavioral Sciences*

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Volume XXII, Number 3

NISOD INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

Introduction to Psychology can be a difficult course to teach and an equally difficult challenge for students. Many students select this course to fulfill the general education/social science requirement for their degree. Often, they attend class out of a sense of "have to" rather than "want to." They may not be highly motivated by the study of psychology nor extremely interested in it. How can we make the sometimes "boring" study of psychology more fascinating and relevant to our students?

One method I have been using is the *personal application*. Personal applications are one page or less in length and can be handwritten. Students are asked to explain how the information they are learning pertains or applies to them, how they have used or applied this knowledge in the past, or how they can use or apply these principles in the future. Grading is on a scale of 0-2 points—2 points if the student describes the topic and makes a good application to his or her life, 1 point if the student addresses only one of the criteria, and 0 points if the student completely misses the mark.

Applications are made weekly for 10 weeks (for a total of 20 points for all applications written according to the criteria). If there is any confusion about how the application should be written, it is usually gone by the second or third attempt. I critique the applications and provide feedback. Almost all students receive the full 2 points by the second or third application. Even mundane chapters/topics on scientific method or statistics lend themselves to personal applications. The students just have to think a little harder and be more creative to apply them.

The purpose of these applications is threefold. First, the students are stimulated to think about the topic or chapter we are discussing in class. This helps them be more prepared for class and stimulates some good discussions. Second, by applying the topic to their lives, students develop a better understanding of the principles of psychology. Students become more aware of how psychological tenets and precepts are integral parts of everyday life; moreover, learning takes place when these principles are applied to individual situations. Personal applications incorporate a hands-on approach to learning psychology. This makes the subject matter more user-friendly, stimulates thinking and discussion, and facilitates learning. Third, applications give students additional writing practice.

Feedback on these applications has been very positive. It is exciting (and personally rewarding) to read an application in which a student has applied a particular principle to his life and has come to a new understanding about himself or about his friends, family, spouse, children, or situation. Students are constantly commenting, "I never realized that before!" or "I really learned something about myself that I will be able to use from now on!" or "I am going to try that on my kids!"

Personal applications have been efficacious in teaching psychology and can be adapted to almost any other course. Students taking an introductory course in psychology may not have a grasp on some of the basic, foundational tenets needed to make personal applications and may need some of the tools learned through the introduction to develop the introspection necessary to write an insightful application. However, the benefits of this exercise outweigh the difficulties; and the activity has become a standard teaching tool in my classes.

Tom DeQuimpaul, *Instructor, Psychology*

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CREATIVE WRITING: MAKING THE CONNECTION

What do Diana Ross and The Supremes have to do with a poem written by Anne Bradstreet? What does Pink Floyd have to do with Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle"? Or what about Hank Williams Jr. and Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, or Men at Work and Christopher Columbus? In an ongoing effort to keep students' interests alive and illustrate the relevancy of American literature, I implement a creative approach to writing about literature, using the rhetorical method of comparison/contrast in an analytical paper. Students are given an assignment—a three-to-four-page typed paper comparing and contrasting a popular song of their choosing to a selection from the course anthology. The assignment following demonstrates the similarities and differences between a reading from the course's anthology in American literature and a popular song.

Description

On one occasion, we were covering Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown." I played "Puff the Magic Dragon," by Peter, Paul, and Mary in Atlanta's Chastain Park, discussing how it was similar to and different from "Young Goodman Brown."

Although the students were receptive to the general idea and did well pointing out similarities and differences between the story and song, they were not too keen on my musical selection—it demonstrated the generation gap! However, a thematic approach was chosen, and the students recognized that both works of art express the concept of journey and a loss of innocence, which can be seen as positive or negative, depending on one's point of view.

Brown takes a literal and metaphorical journey into the forest; and little Jackie Paper, too, goes on a journey with his friend, Puff, the magic dragon. Brown's newlywed bliss fades, and he becomes aware of the evil in himself, his family, and his society. He loses his innocence, but his loss can be a positive experience since he heightens his awareness; however, some students prefer to see his loss as a negative because of his attitude toward family and society after he returns to Salem. Jackie Paper, also, loses his innocence, as signified when Peter, Paul, and Mary harmonize and sing:

> "A dragon lives forever,
> but not so little boys.
> Painted wings and giant's rings
> make way for other toys.
> One gray night it happened;
> Jackie Paper came no more,
> and, Puff, that mighty dragon,
> he ceased his fearless roar."

Again, one can see this change as positive or negative. Jackie's growing up is a fact, but what seems sad is that he loses his imagination.

After the illustration was completed, assignment sheets were distributed. Students were told to select songs they liked, regardless of type. I asked that they bring a cassette or CD for me to hear or a printed copy of the lyrics for me to read and that they submit rough outlines, describing the connections they see.

Findings and Implications

Sometimes, I do not understand the music that students bring to me, but I trust them enough to go with their choices. After I have reviewed their selections and their rough outlines, I write them notes and agree to meet with them individually to answer questions or provide other assistance. They show up at my office, not because they have a great many problems, but because they are excited about what they have found. Of course, musical selections are dependent on the persons making them, but they have included rap, religious, country, pop, hard rock, and alternative music. Sometimes, a more nontraditional student will select a 50's or 60's song to which I can relate.

Prior to this assignment, students often moaned and groaned about having to write yet another paper and often questioned how the readings were related to them. I have found students to be more interested in the readings and to write better papers because they are enjoy seeing the various connections between their favorite songs and selections from the anthology. Comments have changed from speculation about relevancy to amazement about connections. While this assignment and method clearly are geared toward English faculty, faculty in other disciplines who adopt the methodology of writing across the curriculum may find this assignment to be practical, as well.

Niles Reddick, *Assistant Professor, English*

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NISOD INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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A TECHNOLOGY ENRICHMENT COOPERATIVE

Butler County Community College embarked upon a $6 million multi-phase technology project to provide voice, video, and data access through information technology for students, faculty, and college staff. Objectives included offering students optional enrollment processes, including enrollment via Internet or through a telephone voice response system; faster response to financial aid requests; and an efficient process for degree audits, not only for students' academic plans at BCCC, but for their transfer to other institutions. Additionally, the plan was to support online coursework and training to business and industry in their work locations and to students in their homes.

During this time, the Information Services (IS) division, through funding from a U.S. Department of Education grant, added three computer technician positions. The division reorganized its staffing patterns under the supervision of the college's chief information officer, another new position. However, it soon became obvious that the work involved in building a new technological infrastructure, while maintaining routine technical service for classroom labs and faculty/staff offices, was overwhelming.

The answer to this problem, of course, was to increase the number of staff in the IS division. However, that was a challenge at a time when personnel budgets could not support additional payroll costs. So, IS generated a plan to train students as in-house computer technicians to fill the gaps in staffing patterns. Consequently, BCCC joined a small but growing number of educational institutions offering computer training to students and then hiring them to decrease labor costs and increase in-house staff.

The Technology Enrichment Cooperative Employee (TEC-E) program was born with two objectives: to provide an enriched learning environment for the TEC students moving from high school to BCCC, and to help meet the service and support needs of the IS division. This program, although not limited to computer science majors, provides daily application of classroom theory and instruction to a hands-on work environment.

TEC-E consists of a one-week (40 hours), paid summer institute that provides hardware/software and network support training specific to the IS environment at the college. The students who participate (TEC Employees or TEC-Es) agree to provide a variety of IS services during their four semesters of enrollment. The TEC-Es earn a differential student pay rate with regular increases as their experience grows. Workloads are 15-25 hours per week each semester.

Students applying for the TEC program must meet these selection criteria:

- An earned high school diploma or equivalent
- TEC application completed with an official transcript and supporting recommendations from instructors and employers
- A demonstrated history of hardware/software or network experience
- TEC summer institute completed
- A completed financial aid application
- Enrollment in 12 hours or more.

The first TEC Institute was held August 1998. The Institute meets one week before fall semester classes begin. The agenda includes intense one-on-one training, focusing on handling of the top 10 daily computer and networking problems encountered by faculty and staff. The morning sessions include lab demonstrations with the afternoon sessions dedicated to fieldwork. Among others, students learn computer setup, troubleshooting, software installation, memory upgrading, sound card installation, printer and computer care and maintenance, computer and network configuration, and customer service. TEC-Es act as resources for entry-level users trying to master Office Suite, browsers, and other basic applications. The latest challenge for the TEC-Es is to design, create, and staff a "help desk" for the college.

TEC is a win-win program. Students learn increasingly more complex applications. They have a guaranteed job while they are enrolled at BCCC and a first-class resumé when they leave. Their on-the-job experi-

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ence, in relation to starting salaries, is in one of the 10 hottest community college programs and in one of the 25 hottest programs nationally. The college has a pool of bright, motivated, inventive workers to help service technical needs across the campus in student labs and faculty, staff, and administrative offices. A visible result of the valuable services of the TEC-Es is the diminishing stack of service requests from faculty and staff, as the college technical environment has improved and support services have increased.

Tom Erwin, *Chief Information Officer*

For further information, contact the author at Butler County Community College, 901 S. Haverhill Rd., El Dorado, KS 67042. e-mail: terwin@butler.buccc.cc.ks.us

PARTNERING FOR CELEBRATION

Partnering can pay off! For the past two years, the Cultural Diversity Committee and the Liberal Arts Department have pooled resources to offer exciting programs featuring artists from various ethnic groups. Our students, faculty, staff, and the community-at-large attended these events free of charge. We filled the 400 seat auditorium each time!

In all of our programs we try to celebrate diversity, increase a sense of community, develop linkages with other organizations, expose our students to published authors and noted artists, and provide role models.

In spring 1998, we hosted two North Carolina writers: African-American Lenard D. Moore and Native American Marijo Moore. Both college and community were invited to attend their readings and discussions on a Tuesday night. On Wednesday morning, the guest writers participated in a panel discussion on "Writing From Your Origins," also featuring our Spanish teacher, a native of Cuba; a student, a native of Guam; and an English professor of Irish extraction, from a neighboring college. Best of all, each writer visited two English classes that day to interact with students. Our college was able to pay for the writers' two-day residencies with a grant from the Education Foundation, funds from the Cultural Diversity Committee, and a special windfall from the college's 40th Anniversary Celebration budget.

In spring 1999, Liberal Arts and Cultural Diversity joined again to present a one-woman show, "Balancing Act," starring Wambui Bahati, of Greensboro. On its way to off-Broadway, the show was touring North Carolina through an A. J. Fletcher Grant. This time we reached out to the local chapters of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill and Mental Health Association for cosponsorship. Our funds paid travel and lodging expenses for Ms. Bahati, and, of course, our auditorium rent was free.

Ms. Bahati's show dealt with her experiences as a professional actress battling bipolar disorder. Accompanied by a three-piece jazz band, she belted out songs and brought the audience to tears with scenes of her ups-and-downs, from childhood to Broadway and back home to a housing project. The next day, she visited humanities classes, engaging students in dialogue.

The visiting artists touched students in amazing ways. For minority students, they served as role models for success. All students caught a glimpse of the creative life and the variety of backgrounds that produce it. But the most gratifying result of our cooperative cultural venture was the reaction of our faculty. Living, breathing artists on campus lifted and inspired us, and renewed our efforts to enliven our classes.

Margaret Baddour, *Instructor, Humanities*
Annette D. Hawkins, *Chair, Cultural Diversity*

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TECHNOLOGY OF HUMANITY—INSTILLING HIGH TOUCH IN HIGH TECH DEPARTMENTS

One Issue

In the early 1990's, we saw a dramatic integration of technology into our local industry and a parallel increase in instructional and assistive technology in the classroom and laboratory. The need for advanced technology skills was evident and, once developed, immediately productive for both educators and businesses. Technology had the immediate effect of supplanting many mundane routines of humanity. Faculty was on a regular in-service training regimen for implementing many new strategies, as well as new software and hardware. While we were increasing our skill levels considerably with integration of various technologies, we were not improving our human skills for instruction, advisement, and the sundry other duties of student-oriented faculty. Faculty noted, "We are getting farther from our students, and they are getting farther away from us and one another"; "We have students that can 'word process' but cannot write or adequately communicate with others"; and " I see people on our staff in the hallways whom I hardly know. Is it like that for our students and graduates?"

Technology faculties are some of the busiest people I know—learning new skills within an expanding discipline, implementing new software and hardware in labs, while maintaining the integrity of their labs. It is easy to lose contact with the rest of the campus.

A Multi-Faceted Solution

First, we set a divisional goal to increase our technology (of humanity) skills. We planned workshops and seminars that emphasized alternatives for the high tech in-service programs. "High touch" skills and attitudes became the focus of these alternative activities: problem-solving skills and their implementation in curriculum; Pryor Report seminars on personal skill development or related issues; motivational books, videos, and publications purchased, reviewed, shared, and discussed in division meetings; bi-monthly publications such as *The Professor* (DeBruyn) and books such as *The Monster Under the Bed* (Davis and Botkin) and *LogoLearning* (Parnell) for interesting discussion. These in-service programs appeared to be successful; so, the faculty, staff, and I began looking for other ways to improve our skills and attitudes.

One strategy developed from the divisional goal was to recognize excellence. Each divisional meeting begins with recognition of articles published, awards received, professional activities noted by peers, and community leadership efforts that improve quality of life. Collegewide recognition is an annual event, honoring outstanding new faculty and an outstanding veteran of five years or more. Our division submits nominees annually.

With such diversity in disciplines, curriculum and lab demands, and classroom schedules, faculty and staff often feel isolated. We instituted a monthly social, hosted by individual departments; no business is discussed, and the emphasis is on camaraderie. The social has been very successful, and departments take their turns hosting.

An annual end-of-term, one-day retreat is held each year. The retreat engages the entire faculty and staff in visioning, planning, and sharing ways of providing an even higher level of service for our students throughout the following year. A planning team works to develop an agenda of engaging activities to ensure fun and productivity.

Finally, all faculty members are academic advisors and may be asked to assist students with academic problems. Sometimes, a student not yet enrolled in a program area will require assistance with developing a semester schedule and identifying the requirements of the selected program of study. Occupational-technical programs are dynamic in maintaining current standards and remaining abreast of the evolution of technology and thoughts or theories. So, a program of study can change courses required for graduation, textbooks, content, or instructional delivery methodology regu-

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larly—confusing for part-time students and advisors not directly involved within the program or technical field.

In each monthly division meeting, a program of study is showcased to assist with these advisement and assistance problems. Faculty will demonstrate or relate instructional best practices. Changes in program requirements are illustrated and reviewed. New distance education courses are introduced and reviewed by peers for content, purpose, and delivery methodology.

The Beneficiaries

The students are the direct beneficiaries of these activities. The curricula of all divisional programs have adopted general education content requirements and added problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. A senior thesis has been adopted by two associate degree programs in which both research and writing skills are emphasized. Programs now require additional writing, speaking, and interpersonal or team-based projects. A steady improvement in exit-test scores in writing and thinking skills has been documented. Graduate surveys indicate an increased appreciation for academic attainment. The nursing program reports steadily improving scores on problem-solving and psychology skill segments on the standardized tests for licensure. Follow-up graduate and employer surveys indicate increased satisfaction with the "soft" skills for success in the workforce—e.g., interpersonal, communication, and problem-solving skills.

Faculty and staff benefit from timely information so necessary to improved quality of academic life, as well as improved instructional and advisement strategies. Each person can learn more about neighbors' and colleagues' pathways to success. Reducing isolation and distance can bring in-touch humans to the technology roundtable.

Earl R. Dodrill, *Chairman, Applied Science and Engineering Technology*

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NISOD 2000

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NISOD INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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ALL THE HELP WE CAN GET

About midway through the spring 1999 semester at Hutchinson Community College, I was pleasantly surprised to receive word from Buhler High School that I was being invited to evaluate two high school seniors taking my English Composition 1A course. The evaluation form asked five questions, covering such areas as attentiveness and current grade. While I have had numerous high school students from different area high schools taking college composition, this was my first opportunity to communicate with high school officials concerning the performance of their students. I responded to their questions right away.

After returning the evaluation forms, I thought about the merits of such intervention on the part of high schools whose students participated in these academic collaborations. When I was a high school senior in 1964-65, only a handful of exceptionally bright students were offered the opportunity to take college courses. But within the last decade, significantly larger numbers of high school students routinely take courses for college credit. For various reasons such as an onerous workload, poor study habits, or an inadequate academic preparation, some of them are unsuccessful. It was clear to me that the high school ought to know how they are faring, and perhaps interventions could be made to reduce the number of unsuccessful students.

According to the principal of the high school, "...the purpose in using this [evaluation form] is to enhance the probability that our students will take this experience seriously." When I interviewed him, he assured me that high school officials counsel students whose evaluations are unsatisfactory—an intervention strategy that they trusted would help students be more successful.

I share the five evaluation questions here; they provide the information necessary to assess performance generally and perhaps pinpoint some reasons for lackluster performance. Answering the five questions was not time-consuming; however, a more extensive list of questions could discourage college instructors from participating in this evaluation procedure.

- Does the student attend class regularly (not more than 1-2 absences)?
- Is the student attentive in class, participates when asked to do so?
- Is the student prepared for tests and other class assignments most of the time?
- Does the student appear to have a good background of information and/or training in preparation for the class?
- Is the student's current grade a "C" or better?

When I informed our college's president about the evaluation procedure, he shared my enthusiasm and expressed the desire to inform other area principals and superintendents about the program. An open remark on the evaluation form states that Buhler's purpose is "to help us encourage [students] in this important transition and to evaluate our academic program...." I appreciate Buhler High School's concern. We need all the help we can get!

Bob Gassen, *Instructor, English*

For further information, contact the author at Hutchinson Community College, 1300 N. Plum Street, Hutchinson, KS 67501-5894.

UT PICTURA POESIS: ENHANCING ART STUDIO COURSES WITH POPULAR IMAGES AND RAP LYRICS

Not long ago, one of my printmaking students came up with a novel idea. He wanted to enter an MTV cover design contest for Korn, a popular hip-hop/rock/rap group that enjoys tremendous popularity among young students today. He asked if I would allow him to work on the design of the cover during class time and if I would mind giving him pointers about the composition and design. I thought that he should integrate the project as one of the assigned techniques (relief printing) in printmaking, thus maintaining the integrity and scope of course objectives.

The student worked on a lino cut, which was the easier technique by which he could graphically translate the design. He not only created the image, but also integrated some words into it. As if Horace's dictum, *ut pictura poesis*, "as in painting, so in poetry," had become a truism, other students became intrigued with the idea of connecting an image with words, and so the project took the form of a true "cordel literature," or literature on a string.

Cordel, a 16th century Iberian art form now thriving in northern Brazil, is the perfect vehicle for visual art students who want to expand their images with words. Relief illustration (woodblock or lino printing) has been both the craft and vehicle that provide the mechanics for these perceptual "literary" flights of the imagination. My students have become adept cordel authors who are not at all shy about performing their verses aloud, as well as displaying the images hanging from a string. These works, however, have been designed/written more for the eyes than for the ears.

With the intention of expanding the cordel idea of an image relating to a narrative, I have developed exciting projects for my Design I students. These students have honed their designing skills on projects as varied as a poster highlighting arts and letters day, a mural depicting the Hispanic heritage for a housing development in Little Havana, and a mural on marine life for the Miami Metropolitan Police Telecommunications Bureau.

The relationship between art and literature has been eased on our campus. Once students see the validity of obliterating the artificial barriers between disciplines, a multi-disciplinary approach to teaching/learning can become a reality. The English department and art department faculties, as well as students, have been working together in *Miambiance*, an award-winning literary/art publication. All of these projects, however, had "strings" attached: By melding the verbal and the visual, the art students in the studio and the literature students in the classroom have crossed unseen boundaries together, without infringing upon their career interests. In fact, these literary/art projects have held these students and their audiences captive.

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THE TRUTH ABOUT TEACHING

Don't let anyone ever kid you: teaching is not hard work. It is exhausting, excruciating work. I had the honor of being an adjunct faculty member for Tunxis Community College during fall '99 semester, teaching the first section of freshman composition. Even though I have spent a fair amount of time in the classroom over the last 20 years, it has not been as a composition instructor. That was where I started in 1970, but the circuitous career path I have taken over the years has led me in other directions. Being in a composition classroom again, however, reminded me of all the emotions I used to experience every semester—a roller coaster of highs and lows, a swing between confidence and self-consciousness, a single breath between knowing and the panic of not-being-quite-sure-but-hoping-no-one-catches-my-error…if-there-was-one.

I had 15 students in this class—small by most standards and certainly a manageable size during paper-grading time. An evening class meeting once a week was a familiar pattern, and nothing seemed unusual until I actually got in the room and realized that I had three hours to make the class meaningful and enriching, rather than boring and potentially deadly. Yikes! What was I thinking? Why did I agree to do this? I felt just like I did that first semester out of graduate school when I walked into a class full of eager students, some of whom were older than I was. (OK, so age is not an issue any more….) Here are some of the thoughts I have about teaching after this experience:

- You can fool some of the students some of the time, but not for long. They know when you are not prepared, intellectually engaged, or paying much attention. They may be polite and not say anything, but they know.
- Most students do not expect you to be the expert all the time on every topic. They seem to enjoy teaching you something they know that you do not and really do appreciate you more if you are open to mutual exploration.
- You get better answers to questions if you ask only questions to which you do not already have a clear answer formulated.
- It is OK to stray from a lesson plan if something more important starts happening in the class. It is NOT OK, however, not to have a plan.
- There are few things more painful than a class that bombs.
- There are few things more exhilarating than a class that clicks.

I am certain that I was not discovering anything new about teaching and learning during this semester. Furthermore, the circumstances in which I operated this semester were not exactly typical. My students were all males between the ages of 18 and 21. They wore uniforms; I wore a body alarm. They were not allowed to go to the bathroom alone; I was told to make sure I had access to the door at all times.

Our classroom was small and not elaborately equipped. We had no computers, no overhead projectors, only one white board, and a VCR that sometimes worked. Students were allowed to have limited amounts of paper and a clear, plastic pen. They were allowed to go to the meager library only once every six days, but could have magazines with them from time to time. They had access to television, but not to cable. No, this was not a local high school, but rather the Manson Youth Correctional Facility in Cheshire. All of the students had been sentenced there. One had been there since he was 14 and will remain until he is 21. I have no idea what he did to earn that sentence. Another student was transferred out and had no choice about finishing the class; he simply disappeared somewhere into the prison system.

In spite of the circumstances, most of these students seemed to be fairly typical of that age group. They were bright, and most of them actually wrote rather well in spite of limited mental stimulation. They were eager students, for the most part, and appreciated anyone who took the time to pay some positive attention to them. One student told me that his mother wanted to be a lawyer and was a student at Manchester Community

College. She had a 4.0 average, and he was determined to match her, A for A.

One thing that surprised me was that these young men all understood why they were there. Not one student played the victim or blamed anyone else for his plight. They had strong opinions but were open to other points of view and to grappling with the subjects at hand. In other words, they were doing better with this education thing than was their teacher.

As always, however, I had high hopes that because of something they heard or read in this class, or perhaps because of (rather than in spite of) my efforts at helping them be better communicators, they would never again be incarcerated. The danger, of course, is that once they are out and return to the environments which contributed to their arriving at Manson in the first place, they will fall back into old patterns of thinking and behaving. There is a good chance that some of them will return to prison as adults. At least that is what the statistics tell us. It is small comfort to know that any who return will be able to write complete sentences and well-constructed paragraphs. So, I tried also to teach life skills which included communication, good decision making, rational thinking, and considering consequences when making choices.

Teaching was simpler when I thought I was responsible only for subject matter, when my primary objectives were helping my students be better writers and making sure they could write about specific pieces of literature. Now I believe there are other issues with which we must concern ourselves, making that job of teaching more complex and much more personal. I want my students to be able to communicate not only about specific literature, but also about issues that concern them directly, by analyzing what they read, what they hear, and what they say.

Ultimately, the ability to think critically, solve problems, and communicate with others will make it possible for students to achieve their goals. Thus, it is our role to remember that we are at our best as teachers when we are more concerned about what students learn than we are about what topics we teach. My incarcerated students may be in a physical prison, but that does not mean that they have to be in a mental prison as well. Helping them be better writers may open some windows, but helping them think for themselves may take down barriers and permanently open doors.

No wonder teachers work so hard—there is a lot at stake!

Cathryn L. Addy, *President*

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THE BROWN PAPER PASTE-UP ANALYSIS: AN INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS MODEL

Public sector enterprises are being pressed for accountability data. Both governmental entities and publicly funded educational facilities are experiencing the accountability demands from the more vocal voter—who is both a contributor to and consumer of facility services.

The Brown Paper Paste-Up Analysis (BPP-UA) is an innovative institutional effectiveness model developed through a private-sector/public-sector partnership. The innovation was formulated by a team of volunteer business leaders in a metropolitan municipality, in cooperation with municipal employees. The problem to be solved was how to identify and mitigate the problem of expensive, inefficient, duplicative, and time-intensive transaction processing in a municipal financial services department.

The procedure involved wrapping inside corridor wall space of one entire floor of a city department with brown craft paper. The long-term goal was to automate and integrate the financial functions of all departments. The short-term goal was to begin to understand each department's financial functioning, one procedure at a time. There were no extant procedure manuals, only the informal network of employees who could be counted upon to "walk through" important transactions, which required timely processing.

The outside business volunteers queried the workers in each area of the department, trying to ascertain the area function, processing procedures, and the flow of documents. The oral procedures reported by the department workers were often contradictory or inconsistent. The volunteers began to "paste up" each document on the paper-covered corridor, visually representing the handling it received (shown by a handwritten notation explaining the processing, or with a stamp, cover documents, or other indicators of the processing actions).

The process was tedious and often required a restart until both the workers and the volunteers learned to work with the brown paper process. Once one procedure was "pasted up," the department workers were summoned to examine the depiction to verify that the procedures were valid. Then, the discussions began. Why does this document go here? Twice! What happens here? Where does it go next? Could this be done in a more effective way? The employees who performed the procedure were the initial effectiveness analysts. This procedure ceded to them the power to participate not only in the analyses of the problems, but in the development of solutions to problem areas.

The placement of all of the documents and all of the steps involved in transaction processing clearly illustrated bottlenecks, redundancies, and unnecessary steps. Placing the brown paper on the public corridors encouraged workers to participate because they and the public were observing the procedure and were curious about its meaning and vocal about its progress.

Once all procedures were pasted up and had been commented upon, and problem areas had been tentatively remediated by the area workers, the contents of the walls were flow-charted, with each component part labeled. The flow charts allowed the information to be portable and to be shared more easily. The process allowed the tracking of documents through departments. Similar pasting and analyzing occurred in each department until all had been brown papered.

The department management then analyzed inter- and intra-departmental flow. Common documents between and among departments were identified, and members of all involved departments discussed the processes. The presence of the business volunteers assured that the territorial issues were minimized and that the discussion focused on how to maximize processing.

Further, citywide meetings were convened, where recommendations for processing were discussed. Documents listing the recommendations were prepared, and the problem-solving analysis entered an even more critical phase.

In the municipal government environment, the BPP-

UA model led to citywide changes in the processing infrastructure. That clarified, simplified, efficient flow could then be integrated and automated. With integration and automation came procedure formalization and standardization, work area reengineering, and work task redefinition. The departments became more efficiency-minded. They now had performance data which could be used for benchmarking.

This model serves as a nonthreatening, yet thorough and accurate, instrument of analysis. The objective of the BPP-UA tool is to gather information on specific areas that interrelate directly with other areas. It affords the employee and the administrator a quantitative and qualitative perspective of the status quo, as well as a dynamic format allowing for innovation and change.

Its effectiveness depends largely on employee participation. Care must be taken to keep this tool effective by avoiding overuse. Its success relies on the quality participation of an energized employee, a member of a problem-solving team. Similarly, the process must not be protracted. In the municipal government application, the analysis was in clear sight of citizens who used the corridor for passage to other areas of the building complex, the mayor and the press, workers and administrators from other city divisions and departments, as well as the workers from the area under study. A large part of its effectiveness was the freshness and energy it generated with its "treasure hunt" nature and relatively short duration. (The actual brown paper exercise was transferred to smaller, more readable media; it was destroyed once its purpose had been achieved and its results had been characterized elsewhere.) The results of the analysis must be formalized (suggestions for change, improvements in processing flow, increased understanding and interworking among employees, for example) and shared with the group to allow all participants to benefit from understanding and owning the process, to assure everyone that the process is not a onetime occurrence and to emphasize that its results are pertinent.

The process itself is quite resource-independent. No particular supplies are needed, other than the brown paper, expansive walls, and capable facilitators who are able to assist the employees in depicting the workflows in a detailed, readable, and accurate manner.

The BPP-UA tool can be used in many environments. An important potential area for examination would be the registration process at a community college. It might be accomplished by papering an institutional access area, which could be rendered both impervious to graffiti and vandalism, and readily available to students, faculty, administration, staff, and taxpayers. Participants—students (student government representatives), faculty (department advisors), administration (student services, counseling staff), and "gateway" or processing staff—would be responsible for their own inputs/outputs. Other areas of analysis could lead to decisions impacting the improved self-management versus outsourcing of various community college functions, student financial aid processing, purchasing procedures, and so on.

The Brown Paper process is a dramatic tool that allows for the palpable depiction of a usually noncharacterizable process. It affords an opportunity to focus visually on the whole or a portion of a process. It is an easy-to-understand, nonthreatening, and friendly medium which can be utilized in extremely diverse work settings. It is both motivational and enjoyable for the participants, and effective and decisive in determining the "next steps" to be taken—a win-win strategy.

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NISOD INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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A PROACTIVE CLASS

The levels of spontaneity, excitement, and sincerity generated when students become active in the learning/teaching process never cease to amaze me. In fact, when the students become creative and assume ownership of their work, the results are remarkable. The role that creativity plays in learning is best illustrated by one of my recent classes.

Each semester I require that students prepare an oral presentation on some computer topic, which can be their choice as long as I approve it. I know that in the business world a programmer or analyst frequently has to make presentations to management or instructional technology users. The students are required to use a visual aid to help make their point. The aid can be handouts, transparencies, board work, posters, PowerPoint presentations, or any other tool they choose to use. The students are usually very creative, and most of them do an outstanding job with this project. The students must listen closely because anything they hear in my class could appear on a test, which stimulates listening, note-taking, and attentiveness.

Last semester one of the students gave a presentation on HTML programming. After a brief explanation of his handout on language rules, he worked with the class on writing an HTML program to create a web site for each student. The class got excited, and learning became personal! Where once this student had not had much to say, there was suddenly camaraderie. He became interactive with all class members—astounding what a little teamwork will generate.

After listening to students excitedly discuss HTML, I asked if they wanted to consider developing a web site for our department. As this was a systems analysis and design class, not HTML programming, students had seen about as much HTML as I had. They were aware that the project would take extra effort and that we would have to learn the language aspect together. Yet, they again were excited and willing. Our webmaster and administration permitted us to develop a website, although no department websites had been developed at that time.

I kept a diary of each class meeting to be sure that we monitored exactly which responsibilities individual students assumed. This diary was not only for grading purposes but also to help keep the class on track with lesson plans for the analysis. Stephen Covey says, "Start with the end in mind." That is exactly what we did. We decided we *would* end up with a departmental website.

We made learning fun. We started with the school's mission statement to be sure we considered the mission and students first. Interviews were conducted with the college's webmaster, teachers in the department, employers of our students, and previous students. Thank-you letters were written. Pictures were taken, and data flow diagrams were drawn. A decision tree was prepared. The results of 20 surveys from two area high schools were entered into the computer, tallied, graphed, and charted to demonstrate the needs of prospective students. Teams of two worked on the programming, much of which had to be done outside of class. The webmaster for the college came to class and answered questions about the programming. When we finished, we had quite an impressive packet of information, and we had a website.

My job as the teacher was to explain the analysis techniques and to guide the process. Every day we covered work done outside class. The students had to give up ownership of each task in order to assume ownership of the whole project. Then we decided what was next and made plans for that part of the project. The discussion on some days would take the entire class time. On other days we would work on the computers. Almost every student gave 100 percent. The project was successful because the students wanted to learn and create, and most of all to be an *important part* of the project.

In past semesters we had analyzed a payroll project, and the last time I taught the class we worked on creating this website using HTML. This semester the class has decided to make a club page for the same site and to enhance the original work. I cannot wait to see ideas the students bring to class in the future.

When students feel creative and take pride in "their work," they get excited. When they get excited, they become proactive; they *want* to learn.

Check out the site at www.icc.cc.ms.us. Then click on programs, two-year technical, and computer information systems technology to see our work.

Gayle Hillhouse, *Instructor, Computer Information Systems Technology*

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"FINDING" NEW SYLLABI

I do my best thinking on walks along a tree-lined canal path near my suburban home, so when I recently needed to create two new syllabi, I decided to look for them along the canal.

At first I was obsessed with *content*. What material should I cover? How would I cover it? How much was I going to have to read and study? What expertise did I have? I even imagined myself delivering long lectures, something I had not done in more than a decade!

Material with which I was not thoroughly comfortable and familiar made me as panic-stricken as a rookie! I could only imagine myself wrestling with the overwhelming tangle of steel cable content while students stared uncomprehendingly. I imagined I would have to untangle it by myself, and I would have to use the heavy steel rope to weave all those hours and hours of class into a course!

A simple question broke my obsessive circle of panic: How could I free myself from the overwhelming responsibility for all that material and all those hours? I admit it was a coward's question, but it led to the next: Who else can take the responsibility?

The answer, of course, was obvious: students. What could *students* do? This question opened the way for real thinking and planning—even inspiration. It marked the real beginning of the syllabi-creation process and led me to ask the most important and productive questions about objectives and purposes:

- What activities and assignments could I transfer from other classes I'd taught?
- What methods and techniques could I recycle?
- What assumptions and themes were translatable?

Before I could answer these questions, however, I had to ask others that were even more essential:

- What do I want students to learn?
- What do they have to do to learn it?
- How will I support their learning?
- How will each of us (teacher and learner) know that learning is occurring?
- How will we know the learning has been accomplished?
- Who will answer these questions? When? How?

These were the syllabi-creating questions! They enabled me to develop both new syllabi with an ease that made them seem "found" instead of developed.

I finished my walk and celebrated my readiness by making notes for this article in my teaching journal, the second best place for me to think. The syllabi nearly wrote themselves.

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NISOD INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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PUBLIC SPEAKING AND THE POWER OF PERSONAL NARRATIVE

When books like *I'd Rather Die Than Give a Speech* are common fare in the marketplace, it's not difficult to understand the daunting challenges speech instructors face. Not only do instructors have to give students the tools to walk through their fear of speaking, but must teach students how to tap into and express their individual voices in a reasoned, rational, and passionate manner. We are increasingly challenged to inspire students to understand the benefits of public speaking as an important life skill.

How can we help students move beyond their fear and become enthusiastic about public speaking? Part of the answer may be the use of personal narrative. The power of the personal narrative is not news to speech instructors. Everyone has heard student speakers who give speeches driven *only* by personal narrative. These are students who refuse to research their topic. Student audiences love these speakers until they learn more about the specifics of giving good speeches. Then, the student who relies only on personal narrative becomes the center of the best constructive criticism. During feedback sessions, he or she is hard-pressed to answer the questions, "Who is your source?" and "Where did you get your information?"

Yet, it is not news to speech instructors that personal narrative accomplishes at least three important tasks when incorporated into speeches: establishes common ground with the audience; helps create a sense of goodwill, which is an important aspect of credibility; and helps keep the attention of the audience.

From discussions with other instructors and student feedback, some of us came to believe that personal narrative, especially biography, could be an agenda for outside speakers in the classroom. Thus, the pilot program of the Community College of Denver Speaker Series was born. The three series speakers in fall 1997 were given a simple task: Show the audience how public speaking helped launch your career.

The first speaker was Jeanne Faatz, the Assistant Majority Leader to the Colorado Legislature and college professor who teaches communications at Metropolitan State College. She was able to incorporate many of the concepts she taught in her beginning speech classes into her speech. She spoke of her beginnings as "a shy, wide-eyed, young girl," and used the acronym "SMART" to delineate the five main points of her speech—"S" for transferable skills, working her way to "T" for critical thinking. Jeanne also incorporated oral cites in her speech and received high scores on her presentation.

The second speaker was Dani Newsome, television and radio host, and former civil rights attorney. She talked about her early days in court and how public speaking skills helped her through tough times in front of judges. Because she was a civil rights attorney, she never had to speak to a jury, but rather to judges. She stood behind a podium equipped with a traffic light. When the light turned green, she could present her case. When the light turned red, she had to stop talking. The judges often sat above the attorney, so Dani addressed the intimidation this situation could create for a speaker. She spoke about speech anxiety; and although her speech was not as structured as the first, the students gave her high scores on the same standard evaluation. Students were most impressed with her ability to sound confident and comfortable—even though she admitted at the end of her speech that she had been nervous. When asked how she managed to appear so confident, she said, "Be prepared and fake it, 'til you make it."

The largest turnout was for Heather McNeil, storyteller, author of two books on storytelling, and librarian. She opened her speech with a story that got the audience focused on taking risks. This was a great segue to addressing speech anxiety, because she then talked about her worst experiences on stage. She addressed aspects of delivery such as body language, dealing with hostile members of the audience, eye contact, and visual aids; and she closed her speech with another story.

Her speech was impromptu, but she pursued the stated goal. She had had training in theater and voice, and this speech was more entertaining than the others.

One particular comment about "looking at foreheads" instead of making eye contact was challenged by the instructors, but discussing this aspect of delivery created more interaction. The students and faculty gave her generally high marks on the standard evaluation.

The series would be considered a success if 60% of the students who were enrolled in beginning speech classes at CCD attended the speeches. Of the 415 students enrolled, only 73 attended (22.9%). There seemed to be two reasons for this low number: the speaker who had the largest audience spoke in the evening, and speakers during the day were in competition with others on campus; a calendar of *all* the speakers on campus for the semester had been distributed to all instructors and included serious competition.

The series was a success in pushing students outside the classroom to evaluate speakers, and student retention improved! Personal narrative as a rhetorical device is perceived in a whole new way because of the series. All in all, it was a great learning experience.

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Clare S. Lewis, *Administrative Assistant, Teaching/Learning Center*

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CHANGING CHANNELS

Ray was coming my way, and a feeling of dread spread through me. For two days, he had been coming to the tutoring lab in search of the key that would crack the code to understanding set theory. After a few questions, I realized he didn't understand basic concepts, and I was failing at explaining them. I changed channels and personalized the problem.

"Ray, you have a job, don't you?" He did a double-take but answered anyway.

"Sure."

"Well, what do you do?"

"I do some filing and run errands." He started talking about sales, production, and the company's structure when I broke in:

"Let's go back to this problem we were doing, and we'll pretend it represents your company. Let's see now, here's set A. Those are the people who do sales. There'll be 20 of them. Set B will represent the people on the line who make the stuff. There're 35 of them. This area where the circles overlap will represent those people who do both sales and production. There must be a few people like that?"

"Yeah." he responded.

"Let's say there're 5 workers in this group. Now the group on the outside will be all the people who work there but aren't salespeople or line workers. That's the support staff like you and the bosses."

"There's the maintenance people too," he added.

"Yeah, let's say there're 40 people in that group. Now how many people are in A?"

He answered correctly and continued answering correctly as we went through the next few questions in the text. I noticed a smile spreading over his face as the answers started coming faster and faster.

"What about this one?" I said, pointing to B'.

"Oh that's easy," he answered, as he tallied up the sales people and support staff.

" A « B?" I asked.

"No problem. You mean once I understand this then I can do probabilities, too?"

"Well, let's see. What's P(A)?"

"That's simple," and he calculated P(A). Calculating P(A«B) and P(A«B') quickly followed. Now the only problem I had was keeping up with Ray as he raced through problem after problem. His excitement and joy were contagious, and soon we were cheering every answer, checking to see if the book was "right."

Learning had happened, and I was part of it. It was a fun learning experience that reminded me of a line from a recent play: "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results." Many of us develop our teaching methods and then expect them to work for every student. Sometimes we need to change channels and try something different.

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NISOD INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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A FIRST-SEMESTER LEARNING COMMUNITY FOR ADULT WOMEN

As in so many other community colleges, adults have become a growing segment of our student population. Half of the students at Moraine Valley are over 25, and almost 60 percent of these are women. They frequently come to the college experience with a host of concerns and worries: memories of negative high school experiences, rusty academic skills, low self-esteem and confidence; they have fears of blending into a campus with traditional age students, juggling their multiple roles, and balancing their incredibly demanding and busy lives. Typically, re-entry students initially enroll for a part-time program. This often means registration by touch-tone phone or on the Internet (convenient, but with little access to more than the most perfunctory information); they don't have to see a counselor or take placement tests (unless they are registering for a math or introductory writing course); they can even choose to bypass orientation sessions.

In my almost 30 years of teaching at the college, I have found that many of these adult students have not assessed their skills, thought through an educational plan, or have information about the many resources and support services offered by the college. Almost 70% of our classes are taught by part-time adjuncts, so many students may not have contact with an instructor who advises or mentors.

The Returning Woman's Program is one response to these barriers to success. Re-entry students spend three mornings (or two evenings) together taking a block of courses—writing, reading, sociology, and college success. Writing skills learned in communications can be practiced in sociology papers, or in college success journal writing. College success teaches study skills, explores individual learning styles and preferences, tackles the common problem of test anxiety, and encourages development of time management skills.

Study groups are formed early in the semester. Each woman has the opportunity to share her writing, study for exams, discuss problems in any of the courses, and develop new ideas for learning in a smaller sub-group. One objective is to help students develop a self-awareness of the learning process and transfer these insights into other courses. In addition to working on skills for academic success, attention and discussion are devoted to personal issues. Many re-entry women are dealing with important life transitions, divorce, abusive relationships, economic hardships, and job decisions. Talking with a supportive group has been critical to their survival in the college setting.

The instructor of the success course is a trained counselor who requires each student to have two personal counseling sessions during the semester; most come back for more. Support services are built into the program, including educational goal setting, career planning and development; tutoring services; a child care center for pre-school age children. By the end of their semester in the program, students are aware of the range of support services available and have learned to negotiate the college's bureaucracy. The faculty in the program are all strongly committed to the needs and aspirations of adult women students. They respect the authority of their experience, acknowledge the many demands of their complicated lives, and attempt to connect the curriculum to personal issues. Collaboration between program faculty and student development personnel, complementary curricular experiences, and a strong support system among the students are central components to the success of this first-year experience.

Two longitudinal studies of program participants found that the retention and graduation rates of these students far surpass those of more traditional students. For example, 78 to 90 percent of the students attending between 1989 and 1993 registered for classes the semester following their enrollment in the program. The retention rate for all students during the same time ranged between 51 and 64 percent.

Over 1000 women have completed the program. Anecdotal reports, comments from the women, and in-depth interviews conducted for an ethnographic study confirm that this learning community is a successful start for their college experience. For many women, it is a life-changing, transformative experience, as well.

THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR STAFF AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (NISOD) ◦ Community College Leadership Program
Department of Educational Administration ◦ College of Education, The University of Texas at Austin, SZB 348, Austin, Texas 78712-1293

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The development of a cohort group, a personalized learning community with intensive academic and social supports, can be effective with other students, too. While traditional-age students have somewhat different needs and issues, they too are dealing with personal barriers to college success such as motivational problems, poor academic skills, a lack of coherence in their educational goals. Their entry experience at college can be just as fragmented; many of my students have never seen a counselor, thought hard about what they need to do to succeed, or understand the connections between their various courses. Like many other community colleges, Moraine Valley now has plans to require an eight-week college success course for all entering students. While this is a good beginning to addressing these issues, the learning community model, as developed in the Returning Woman's Program, has the added advantage of combining college success skills with academic courses that are managed by a collaborative team of faculty members who provide ongoing personal discussion and support.

Diane Horwitz, *Professor, Sociology*

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CYBER ORIENTATION: THE FUTURE IS NOW

Broward Community College is committed to the development of the total student. Many of our students are not only first-generation in college, but also first-generation in the United States. They often arrive underprepared in basic skills. It is our philosophy that a comprehensive orientation program can disseminate critical information, promote self-sufficiency, and ease the transition into college—thereby increasing student success and retention. Most of our students participate in a four-hour new student advisement and registration session on campus. However, those unable to attend the campus session must be welcomed, too.

BCC has responded to this need by providing information and a variety of services over the World Wide Web, via Cyber-Orientation, an orientation program which may be accessed 24 hours a day. Cyber-Orientation acts as a substitute and/or supplement to our on-site program. The information it provides is relevant to all students: programs of study, the college catalogue, what to expect in class, appropriate classroom behavior and decorum, academic standards of progress, balancing school with work and family, course load, support services, course scheduling, and self-registering using campus computers or phones.

Students may choose native or non-native English speakers to review test scores and determine proper course placement. Students access specific degree requirements and other information pertaining to the degree or major they are seeking. The program culminates with a twenty-question quiz to assess each student's grasp of the information. New students, distance learners, and returning students all benefit from this program initiative.

Since on-site and Cyber-Orientation have been implemented, faculty and staff have observed that students are better prepared for the first day of class and their college experience. Attendance at workshops and utilization of support services such as tutoring and mentoring have increased 140%. Disciplinary referrals have decreased by 20%. Waiting times for advisement services during peak registration periods have been reduced by 25%. Students appear to have a better understanding of degree requirements and are more likely and able to self-advise. They are taking a greater interest in and more responsibility for their own academic choices, progress, and performance. Consequently, we expect they will experience greater success.

Peter Barbatis, *Dean of Student Affairs*
Eric Ackerman, *Professor*
Robert Bullard, *Senior Advisor*
Michael Tenenbaum, *Senior Advisor*

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NISOD INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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POW-WOW: OPPORTUNITIES FOR WRITING

While journal writing has become a staple of English composition courses, traditional journal writing can be redundant and boring. A modification to journal writing we call POW-WOW, an acronym for "Practice Our Writing—Write on Whatever," can help students approach writing in a unique way.

By definition, a pow-wow is an American Indian social gathering. Dancing and socializing offer time for sharing lives and practicing traditions. POW-WOW in composition class allows students time to write about what is going on in their lives, reflect on their writing and thinking, and practice their composition skills. It is a special unstructured time (the first 10 minutes of class) for students to compose at their computers.

My students write more now. E-mail and chat rooms have increased opportunities to write friends and the instructors. They can ask questions of their instructors without risking peer judgments, and often preface their questions with, "I know this might be a dumb question, but...".

On occasion, outside events interfere with students' concentration in class. When students write about what is on their minds, they sometimes get beyond their concerns and are more willing to concentrate on class activities. One student commented: "POW-WOW provides a good transition between talking to my friends and getting into the learning mode for class." Some say POW-WOW time is a good outlet for stress, that participation in POW-WOW relaxes them. One student likes to participate in POW-WOW because he never had the chance to "just write about stuff" that is in his head. Plus, students have observed that POW-WOW provides an opportunity to formulate other points of view about an idea or activity instead of just talking to someone else about it.

POW-WOW provides opportunities for instructors to take attendance and return papers while students are writing. Instructors can observe students' composing processes in a casual and nonthreatening way and read what they are writing.

Composition instructors know that most students do not seize many opportunities to write or take time to revise their writing. However, composing for 10 minutes at the beginning of each class provides time to write and think, work out topics, generate ideas, and define the structure of assigned papers. It is a time when grammar, spelling, and mechanics take a back seat, and students can work solely on the message in their papers.

Instructors can get some additional help in identifying individual writing styles during POW-WOW sessions. Becoming more aware of students' unique composing characteristics can alert instructors to any attempts they might make to plagiarize the work of others.

POW-WOW increases student motivation and on-task work. Students often come early and begin to write, enjoying the opportunity to personalize the structure, topic, and style of their writing. Implementing POW-WOW time as a regular activity at the beginning of class immediately engages students in composing activities and sets the instructional tone.

Stephanie Gaddy, *Instructor, English*

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DONATIONS FOR THE HOMELESS

While trying to teach our Social Service Technology students about the homeless people in our community, it occurred to me this was an excellent opportunity to help develop their sense of caring for others. In addition to what was being learned in the classroom, students could respond to some community needs. I decided to involve students in a service learning project collecting personal items, hats, gloves, scarves, coats, toys, and canned goods for individuals in homeless shelters.

Committees were formed during class time. One committee made posters and signs announcing the project and inviting everyone in the college (administrators, support staff, faculty and other students) to participate. Another coordinated the collection. Yet another was responsible for obtaining the collection boxes and placing them throughout the college, collecting items from the boxes, and placing everything in storage until time for delivery. A transportation committee arranged for trucks and vans to transport the boxes and bags to the homeless shelter. Another contacted the college and the city newspapers about this worthy project being carried out by college students.

Feedback was solicited from the students, and the project was critiqued for necessary refinements. Then, after all exams were taken, the students loaded trucks, vans, and cars and transported the many boxes and containers to the shelters.

Over the years, this service learning project has continued to be an overwhelming success. Many times students have held bake sales to raise extra money for donations, and they have collected items from their places of employment, family members, and neighbors.

Community agencies currently receiving donations are three homeless shelters (one founded and operated by one of our graduates) and a battered women's shelter. These agencies work in partnership with the University of Toledo to provide training for our students through a Social Service Technology internship class. Many of our students also volunteer at these same agencies, and many are able to secure employment there after they graduate.

This service learning project has evolved into a working partnership between the University of Toledo and community agencies, and all benefit. The needy benefit through the hard work and generous donations of the students. The students benefit by developing into more caring, compassionate professionals and being involved with key community agencies as part of their service learning projects. The agencies benefit from the donations that help to lighten their operating costs. And the Social Service Technology Program and the University of Toledo benefit as these agencies partner with us in helping train our students.

Janice E. Carson, *Assistant Professor, Health and Human Services*

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NISOD INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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RETHINKING A SCIENTIFIC ASSIGNMENT

Early in my career as an eager young college instructor, I wanted to diversify the experience of learning human physiology. So I sent my students to the library to report on the latest scientific findings in our field of study. Since I perceived this to be a conventional collegiate activity, I thought very little of discussing specific parameters or expectations and merely emphasized the due date of the assignment.

The resulting papers not only represented the expected diversity of composition quality, but lacked conformity in format and content style. The grading process was difficult, but I diligently undertook it to make constructive comments on ways to improve student writing. I concluded the assignment was too time-consuming on my part and promptly began considering alternatives.

However, upon returning the research papers, I was dumbstruck as one student announced that my assignment forced him to break his record of never having been in the campus library. And yet another student, hands on her hips, loudly proclaimed: "You can't grade-me-down for 'incorrect spelling' and 'poor sentence structure'; scientists DON'T DO English!" Hence, my scientific journal abstract assignment was born, or reborn, in earnest.

Communication is the key! I have found the students need to be given clear guidance. And although some students may feel constrained by the rigid parameters of this assignment, many more welcome specific directions.

- Collect and read three research articles that emphasize the topic of human physiology from three different scientific journals available from the library from the following list:
  The American Journal of Sports Medicine
  Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
  Journal of Orthopedic and Sports Physical Therapy
  The Lancet
  The New England Journal of Medicine
  Science
- Only select journal issues published since the month of (month the last abstracts were due).
- Please allow the instructor the opportunity to approve your article selections.
- Write your abstract as a comprehensive, objective summary of the scientific study; including who did the study, the purpose of the study, the method of the study, details about the subject population, statistical results, and the researcher's conclusions.
- The abstract should be written in the past tense using the third person (don't use "I" or make references to yourself or your beliefs).
- Quotations should be limited and even avoided.
- Use careful attention to keep mechanical errors (spelling, grammatical, and punctuation errors) to a minimum as they will be considered in the overall grade in addition to the actual content of the abstract.
- An abstract will not be accepted if any portion of the content is plagiarized.
- Each heading must include the student's full name, course title, and the journal referenced in APA style.
- Each abstract must be stapled to a photocopy of the entire original article.
- Each abstract must be presented separately, each on an 8.5" x 11" sheet of paper.
- Each abstract's length is limited to one side of one page.
- Each abstract must be typed. (Use of the computer is encouraged.)
- Please do not present the assignment in a folder or binder.
- The entire assignment is due no later than (2 weeks before midterm).

The Rationale

By utilizing current scientific journals, I am able to expose my students to the most current research that has not yet found its way into the textbooks or that, in a few rare cases, has actually nullified an accepted tenant of human physiology. More often than not, I hope the assignment simply will begin to demystify the scientific process for students and allow them to see how scientific research rarely ever proves anything beyond a shadow of a doubt.

Since professional journals exist for most every field imaginable, I would presume this assignment could be modified to fit most any field of study. With some minor modification, it could be tailored for either the secondary level or the advanced pre-professional student.

I am careful to specify the titles and publication dates of the scientific journals that may be used for the assignment. This allows me the realistic opportunity to read ahead and be prepared for the students' interpretations. Then by limiting the issues to those that have been published since the last scientific abstract assignment was due, I can preclude the temptation of a student submitting a graded assignment from a previous semester.

I encourage students to bring photocopies of their selected articles to my office for approval. Primarily, I see this as an opportunity to get better acquainted with my students. I can then access each individual's understanding of the assignment and ensure each is getting off on the right foot by having selected articles that fit the assignment parameters. Additionally, the photocopy of the article that is later submitted with the scientific journal abstract allows me to search for and prove instances of plagiarism in a judicious manner. Conversely, on occasion the photocopy has actually exonerated a student I suspected of plagiarizing, but could not find evidence to substantiate my claim.

Most college students have had more experience writing personal narratives, comparison/contrast, argumentative, and essay style papers than they have writing technical objective summaries. Hence, this assignment offers a valid venue outside of the traditional English classroom to develop this writing technique. And although I do not profess to be an English instructor or even attempt to teach the nuances of the field, I do evaluate the use of proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation!

I ask my students to document their references using APA style, principally for the sake of requiring them to step out of their established MLA style high school comfort zone and to follow the guidelines of yet another widely accepted method of reference documentation.

The stringent format requirements compel the student to adhere to brevity and conformity when writing their scientific journal abstract. Most would agree that the task of writing succinctly often requires more thought and organization than simply allowing the pen to flow. The issue of format conformity allows grading to be a bit more of a uniform process. The due date of the assignment is generally two weeks before midterm, thus allowing me plenty of time to grade and include them on the midterm progress report.

After the abstracts have been graded and returned, I ask each student to give an informal 3-5 minute oral presentation about one of their abstracts. Initially, this was an opportunity for public speaking outside of a traditional speech class, but it has evolved into a type of journal club group activity. Sometimes, the students have criticized the design of a study and questioned the conclusions of the researchers. Many thought-provoking class discussions and even a few impassioned personal stands have ensued. Empowered students who possess the ability to think critically are a positive yet immeasurable outcome of this assignment as well.

Each year the editor of our campus publication, *The Colby Community College Collection*, selects three or four high-quality scientific journal abstracts that my students have written and I have submitted for the "Writing Across the Curriculum" section. Consequently, the assignment affords students the opportunity and honor of being published.

The scientific journal abstract assignment has become a work-in-progress for me. Generally, I find myself tweaking the rubric here and there to increase the clarity of the assignment, enhance the opportunity for learning, or prevent plagiarism and other types of academic dishonesty. Overall, it represents my continuing effort to incorporate a multitude of disciplines in the classroom and my firm belief that true learning is a synthesis of our total educational experience.

As we find ourselves inside the threshold of a new millennium with the information highway electronically whisking us all along, I have found myself clinging ever more tightly to the library. Throughout history, scholars from all disciplines have found great academic inspiration and solace while working amid book-lined nooks of the library and breathing its vaguely musty aromas. As instructors we owe it to today's young scholars not only to guide them through the Internet's maze of wonders but reintroduce them to the library and the art of integrating academic disciplines into a cohesive educational experience.

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NISOD INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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SHORTENING THE DISTANCE TO SUCCESS IN BIOLOGY

In an effort to shorten the distance between student and instructor, I have implemented a new strategy that may be of interest to others. In the past, following the first major test, I would post the grades and ask students to come by my office if they wanted to look at their test papers. I would make the common remarks that if some of the students didn't start studying, they were going to be left behind. So much for the pep talk. Very few students ever came by my office to look over their tests. I began to realize that I had to be more assertive in my efforts to instill a bit more concern for learning into the minds of my students.

So now, after the first and second tests, I post grades as usual, with the following exceptions. Alongside the ID numbers of students making an A, B, or F on the first test, I write "see Mr. Lay," instead of a score or grade. I also place a sign-up sheet on my office door where students can schedule appointments to see me over the next few days.

When a student who has made an F on the test comes in, I find his paper, give him a key to the test, let him see what he missed and ask questions if he wishes. I also talk about the amount and type of study that are necessary to do well in this course. I try not to be too negative after the first test and usually let the student know that turning things around right now is critical—passing the course is still possible.

But I do not stop there. I have often felt that while we usually criticize those who do poorly, we do not always praise those who have done well. So the students making A's and B's must come to my office to get their first test grades, also. I give them their test papers and answer keys for checking their responses. I then explain that the main reason for calling them to my office is to thank them for their diligent work and congratulate them on making a good grade on the first test. Sometimes, the student is surprised. I've had students tell me that they thought they must be in trouble. I've also had them tell me that they had never had a teacher thank them for doing well.

I continue the same procedure for the second unit test with the following exception; only students making A's and F's are asked to come by. This time, I counsel students making an F as I did after the first test—unless they are "second timers." Then, I look at all of their grades, including lab, and give them an idea of their overall average and what will be required for the remainder of the semester in order to pass or make an acceptable final grade. I ask about study habits, work schedules, and extracurricular activities, then discuss options—e.g., dropping the class and trying again later. Scholarships and financial aid may complicate these options. How about a tutor? We have tutors available through Phi Theta Kappa. Is there participation in a study group? I customarily divide my classes into study groups.

Students making A's are thanked again for their good work.

We are concerned about students' welfare and really *care* that they succeed. But, we must do more than just say, "I care."

William E. Lay, *Chairman, Natural Sciences*

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IS THIS REALLY IMPORTANT?

"Is this important?" "Is this going to be on the test?" "I missed a day—did we do anything important?"

These questions are disliked by teachers everywhere. One of my son's teachers had these and seven other questions listed on a wall poster, labeled "Don't Even Ask These." But I had to wonder what students were really wanting to know when they ask these questions and why we respond in such a negative manner.

Perhaps all students are asking is for prioritization of the information we have presented. Teachers may have prejudiced the way that the students ask. They may have used "it will be on the test" to provide a crude form of prioritization of the information presented in class and text—a faulty method. What students really want to ask is more likely "how important is the information you gave just now compared to the other information layered in text, lecture, or other sources?" Of course, students may not feel empowered to ask this way, or know how to ask; so perhaps the more accepted approach is the "test" question.

Our response, unfortunately, is also preconditioned. We are angered or irritated that they are talking us into doing some of their critical thinking for them. The precedent to analysis would be prioritization of information, and they want a shortcut.

Should we be angered or irritated? I suggest that while this might be a natural response, another might stimulate more learning. After all, in introductory courses, particularly in general education classes such as the ones I teach in history and government, some events and ideas truly are of more importance than others.

Someone applying for a job who does not know the particulars of the Jacksonian Bank Controversy is not considered uneducated. However, someone who cannot articulate the significance of the attack on Pearl Harbor is considered uneducated, even if he passed all of the required history courses. Those of us with multiple degrees recognize the importance of prioritization implicitly. So why do we bow our necks at students who seek it?

I think we may see these questions as a threat to our position. Who among us has not wanted to say, "Of course, if I said it, it's important—am I just flapping my jaws up here?" To respond from an authority position, however, misses the point, and may miss the questions really being asked. After all, in an hour-and-a-half lecture, did you say at least one thing that was less important than the rest? Do you really put *everything* on the test? Perhaps the best way to turn these questions into a profitable education experience is to direct questioning responses back to the student.

- When asked, "Will this be on the test?" we could ask, "Should it be?" The prioritization effort could drive the class toward consensus.
- If asked, "Did we do anything important in the class I missed?" we should ask the class at the beginning of the next class period. Prioritization could be sought from the whole class, asking just how important the information presented was to those who were present. Of course, care should be taken to avoid embarrassing the student asking the question.

Of course, the instructor should structure the consensus-achieving mechanism so as to fit the lecture and goals of the course; but a lively debate, even an uninformed debate, can be used to enlighten.

Finally, I discuss the idea of prioritization with the class. I am surprised when students demonstrate a limited knowledge of this concept, but they typically need a name to attach to what they are attempting to do and are grateful for guidance. They want to know that it is acceptable to believe that some things are more important than others. It gives them some freedom to set their own priorities about information they gather in their classes and their texts.

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NISOD INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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LEARNING STYLES ACROSS THE COLLEGE

Respecting differences through learning styles has become one of our greatest outcomes from investigating and implementing the 4MAT Learning Styles System at the Community College of Aurora. By law, community colleges in Colorado have an open-door policy. That means that we do not ask what a student's ACT or SAT score is, or even if that student completed high school; anyone over 16 can enroll in our classes.

Adults are generally not passive learners; they "vote with their feet." And if they do not learn, do not receive respect, or do not find meaning in their classes, they simply do not come back. Learning and using learning styles theory has been a scientifically based, structured program to help faculty, staff, and students learn about themselves and others as learners, then put that knowledge into practice. At the end of a yearlong project on learning styles, a science instructor wrote in his final report:

"Hearing the questions put forth by other students in my classes or seeing others working on memorizing facts while I struggled to understand concepts certainly revealed different learning styles. Since my own amalgam of styles had proved so successful through my years of learning, I suppose I felt that any other method must surely be inferior to my own. To speak with and perform exercises with the other learned professionals in our group showed me that other styles cannot only work but work well. And if my colleagues do not do things the same way I do, what of my students?"

Through learning styles workshops and ongoing support, our faculty have learned ways to honor the individuals and meet the needs of a variety of learners in their classes. We started with a three-day workshop in August 1993, which kicked off a yearlong project for about 26 faculty. Our yearlong projects involve 18-20 hours of workshops on a specific topic the first semester, then planning, implementation, peer coaching, evaluation, and final reports the second semester. We have created wonderful successes with this change model in the areas of ethics, critical thinking, writing across the curriculum, diversity, study skills, and other topics. But even before the end of this project, we knew we all wanted to become more involved.

In August 1994, we followed up with four additional days of training. Near the end of this session, a core group brainstormed a one-and-one-half page, single-spaced list entitled "Learning Styles—Classroom Action Plan." Every item on this list, with the exception of controlled studies in math classes, has been completed and expanded. A major change has been to move from a classroom to a collegewide focus, including students, faculty, and staff.

Highlights of our accomplishments in the past few years include the following:

Students

- In-house learning styles experts are available to visit classes.
- Credit classes have been offered.
- CC Advocates and CC Ambassadors, student leaders who receive credit for visiting high schools and conducting CCA tours, receive training in learning styles and use it to plan their presentations.
- Our Learning Resource Center offers one-hour introductory workshops in learning styles along with other student success topics about once a semester.
- A one-credit class combining learning styles and Brain Gym® is offered to students with learning disabilities.

After visiting a faculty workshop, our president required that everyone at the manager or above level attend a four-hour session. A number of directors sent their entire staff, including work study students, to attend learning styles sessions. A number of departments have completed teambuilding sessions focusing on communication, problem solving, and customer service based on learning styles.

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Faculty

- Learning styles workshops for faculty have been offered in four-hour, three-day, four-day, and five-day increments for novices through experts.
- Follow-up workshops include Beyond Mid-Terms and Finals, Teaching Styles and Preferences, Learning Styles and Assessment, Learning Styles: A Second Look Designing Courses with Style
- A real change of compartmentalizing people: at one session, we had a secretary, bus representative, accounts payable clerk, and three work study students in the same workshop with faculty. At most colleges this would be impossible!
- A Friday Afternoon club meets about twice a semester for faculty to discuss their successes, problems, and questions about learning styles. This resulted from faculty demands at the end of a yearlong project that they have opportunities to further explore learning styles theory. It is a casual format which allows faculty to set the agenda, rather than having a formal workshop.
- Five faculty have written *One Approach*, a practical booklet providing information on implementing learning styles at the college level. It is available on our website, cca.cccoes.edu/teachingforachange.
- Four faculty have worked to create a basic guide to implementing learning styles theory into distance courses; this booklet is also available on our website, and both booklets are available for purchase.
- CCA sponsors Teaching for a Change, an annual faculty development conference. Prior to the conference each year, we offer an in-house working session to help CCA presenters employ learning styles theory to create interactive, practical sessions. Some faculty request assistance in planning presentations at other conferences throughout the year.
- At the Teaching for a Change conference, we have offered learning styles workshops and preconference sessions with great results.

What's next? Faculty are interested in additional exploration into assessment and learning styles as well as continuing to offer workshops to newer faculty. A learning styles quiz, suitable for students, faculty, and staff, will be available soon on our website.

Throughout these activities, a major theme has been that learning styles are not designed to label people or put them into boxes. Rather, we have used learning styles successfully to recognize, understand, honor, and even enjoy their differences.

Diane Cheatwood, *Faculty Development Specialist*

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NISOD INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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DUAL CREDIT TRANSMISSION

Cedar Valley College's Automotive Career Technician program has a solid history of success, but that did not stop us from shifting into a higher gear last summer. An invitation to conceptualize a way of offering this program to high school students from a southern independent school district in the Greater Dallas area met with open arms and receptive minds. It required that we rethink the traditional boundaries of both the dual credit program, whereby high school students receive concurrent college credit for their classes, and the automotive department. The result is a partnership that redefines the scope of the technical/occupational programs in our district and their target populations.

The spark that ignited this partnership was a discussion between an instructional associate *par excellence* in our automotive program and a forward-looking administrator at Wilmer-Hutchins High School. Wouldn't it be great, went the musings, if the automotive shop at the college could be used to train high school students in a skill that could keep them in school and help them get jobs?

The Proposal: Baiting the Hook

The details of the partnership were worked out meticulously to accomplish multiple goals: to entice favorable reaction from the high school principal and district superintendent; to provide a cost analysis of the program; to establish a two-year curriculum for the students; to articulate responsibilities of both parties in the partnership; and to establish a timeline for executing all stages of the agreement. A college team comprised of the director of high school programs, the dean of business, science, and technology, and all members of the automotive department put their heads together to anticipate costs, responsibilities, benefits, concerns, and a preliminary timeline.

Most critical to this proposal was a list of advantages to the students themselves:

- they would receive specialized advising and assistance;
- they would gain an understanding of multiple career options;
- they would receive personalized instruction and hands-on learning;
- they would be part of a cohort learning community during the entire program, working together with other college students with similar goals and aspirations;
- they would take all courses on a college campus where they could interact with advanced students currently working in the industry;
- they would receive a Level I Certificate with options for continuing work toward a Level II Certificate or an Associate's Degree, the latter available with three additional semesters of work; and
- they would receive valuable work experience and job placement services.

All costs for the program would be borne by the Wilmer-Hutchins Independent School District and were calculated based on the college's costs for facilities, supplies, equipment, textbooks, and tuition. The fee would be a lump sum for two classes of students with a maximum of 15 students per class. The proposal was accepted almost verbatim by the high school principal, superintendent, and board of trustees. The next step was the creation of a legal contract, hammered out by the Dallas County Community College District legal counsel.

The Contract: Delineating Responsibilities

The first year was considered a pilot for what could become an expanded program the following year. Both parties would evaluate the program after one year to assess its viability and cost-effectiveness. At that point, it would be renegotiated or renewed.

The high school would recommend students for the program; they would then be interviewed and either accepted or rejected by the staff of our automotive department. The staff was adamant that they have the last word on individual acceptance, deeming it critical to the success of the program. They would register

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students and pay all fees, including tuition and textbooks, with the funds provided by the school district.

An on-site reception and orientation would be held for the students and their families, attended by college administration and faculty, and high school administration and counselors. This evening event would introduce and welcome the students and garner support from their families.

Each class would meet two hours a day, five days a week, for 18 weeks. The high school would provide transportation for both classes of students to and from Cedar Valley College every afternoon for the duration of the courses. Cedar Valley would grant seven college credit hours per semester for the courses according to the guidelines established for dual credit classes by the Dallas County Community College District, Texas Education Agency, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Wilmer-Hutchins would grant high school credit for the classes, according to TEA and THECB guidelines. Field experience, job shadowing, internships, and co-op experience were built into the program.

The Results: A Cooperative Experience

During a pilot of one academic year, the program operated like a well-tuned race car. Classes were hands-on from the start, involving equal parts classroom and shop work. Working as a cohort helped instill confidence and reinforce positive behavior. Older students at the college served as peer mentors throughout the program, modeling important skills such as shop etiquette and customer service, and providing valuable role models for the younger students.

Twelve seniors and 16 juniors were bused to our campus every day for 38 weeks. One student dropped out of the program, and the other 27 received Level 1 certificates. Some qualified students began working at area auto shops during the second semester of classes. Four students from the program were placed directly in full-time summer jobs, with salaries ranging from $175 to $300 a week. Ten of the 12 graduating seniors from the program stayed at Cedar Valley and enrolled in the program full-time, working toward an AAS degree. The other two went into the armed services. One junior high school student has enrolled in the summer AAS program.

We absolutely beam over the success of the first-year pilot and are revving up the shop engines in anticipation of the second year's cohort. What was the biggest problem during the entire year? The high school is on a block schedule with alternating A and B days. Busing two classes roundtrip while keeping in sync with every-other-day schedules of both institutions proved to be a challenge, but high school administrators responded effectively. The buses were a few minutes late on occasion. That is a resounding success by any standard.

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NEGOTIATING LONG-TERM LEARNING AGREEMENTS

My students and I recently developed the "long-term learning agreement," a mechanism for achieving several learning goals. The course was public speaking, but the strategy is applicable to other disciplines.

Long-term learning agreements are compacts between faculty members and students which permit students to "borrow" grades and pay to keep them by carrying out specified supplementary activities for an extended period *after* an academic term ends. These agreements can combat grade inflation, reinforce students' self-confidence, and allow instructors to diversify and individualize the learning experiences and pathways available to students. The cost of these agreements is negligible, their applicability throughout the community college environment is broad, and their dimensions can be designed by instructors to meet any learning objectives they choose.

Nature of the Agreements

Students who feel their performance does not measure up to their own expectations by the approach of semester's end may join their instructor in signing a pledge to carry out certain supplementary activities during an extended period *after* the term ends. The student agrees that the instructor will withdraw the points associated with the supplementary activities in the event that the activities are not completed. In essence, students borrow a final grade and pay over time to keep it by demonstrating acceptable levels of activity and learning.

Instructors can structure and define the terms of a long-term learning agreement any way they wish. Students might be expected to engage in required tasks that are impossible to complete within the time constraints of a standard quarter or semester. In my public speaking class, for example, one cluster of supplementary extended learning activities—valued at 10 points out of 100 for the final grade—is to join a local Toastmasters club, attend at least one of its meetings per month for six months, and submit a confirming written statement from the club president after each visit.

The range of assignments included in a long-term learning agreement is limited only by the instructor's imagination. Following are just a few illustrative examples of what students might be expected to achieve in agreements in various disciplines:

- Science: Interview a number of authorities on a topic of contemporary interest, such as biotechnology, and prepare a report which summarizes and assesses their perspectives.
- Mathematics: Solve problems in an area which was not thoroughly covered within a course but about which you have demonstrated aptitude or interest—e.g., multivariate equations or fundamental topology.
- Humanities: Produce a work of art, visit and assess the exhibits of selected museums, attend a lecture series, or interview a speaker of another language in that person's native tongue.
- Social Sciences: Serve as a volunteer in a political campaign, or write an analysis of how effectively a juvenile probation office achieves its mission.

Practical Applications/Implications

Because the agreement offers students an opportunity to transcend the time boundaries and expectations of a particular course in order to achieve a higher grade, instructors may feel less pressure to reduce course standards than they would otherwise during the academic term. The likelihood of grade inflation in the actual body of a course may be diminished.

Some students are more extrinsically motivated than others, and the long-term learning agreement provides a special opportunity for those who are predisposed to strive toward a particular required grade to achieve that goal through hard work. Realizing this opportunity may reinforce students' self-confidence and help them maintain progress in the academic environment.

Long-term learning agreements present a chance for instructors to diversify and individualize the learning experiences and pathways they create for students. The agreements breach rigid academic time blocks and may allow students considerable latitude in how and when to accomplish tasks. Therefore, they may offer significant challenges and encourage independent personal growth.

Long-term learning agreements resemble an "incomplete" grade, so students who encounter health or personal problems during a course and cannot complete all the required work by the end of the term will have an opportunity to do so. The advantages of signing long-term learning agreements, as opposed to receiving an "I" grade, are that they start with an affirmation of students' abilities, incorporate a promise by the instructor to act as a partner with the students to develop those abilities, and can result in a positive report on the students' transcripts.

Finally, perhaps the greatest implication and strength of the long-term learning agreement as a pedagogical measure is its potential to counteract the perennial tendency of students and faculty members alike to "take" a class in the same way a person "takes" a dose of medicine—that is, to consume it as swiftly as possible and then forget about it entirely. The long-term learning agreement, in contrast to this "medicinal" approach, may contribute to students' lifetime growth and development by focusing their attention, outside and beyond the range of the academic environment, on the nature and value of a particular kind of knowledge.

Phillip N. Venditti, *Director, Liberal Arts and Sciences*

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RECOGNITION AWARDS: ENCOURAGING EXCELLENCE IN THE CLASSROOM

Since 1993, Lethbridge Community College (LCC) has recognized excellence by issuing awards, co-sponsored by the faculty association and the student association, to those instructors who have best demonstrated teaching excellence.

Instructors are nominated by students and faculty. The categories of teaching excellence, professional responsibilities, and interpersonal skills serve as criteria. A requisite number of students and faculty are required to support the nomination. The instructors are notified about their nomination and asked to submit their philosophy of teaching excellence, including examples of how he/she has innovated curriculum, created materials, or used teaching methods in ways to stimulate learner curiosity about the subject. They also list professional responsibilities (e.g., served as faculty vice president) and describe how their interpersonal skills allow them to reach out to the students.

Recipients of the teaching excellence award receive an engraved plaque at LCC's annual teaching excellence award ceremonies, held just before convocation. Instructors receiving the awards are introduced and make a short speech in the presence of friends, family, students, and colleagues. Then they receive the ovation that they richly deserve.

At convocation, the president of the faculty association reads the positive commentaries provided by the nominees, then calls the recipients to the stage, where their contributions to teaching excellence are acknowledged before hundreds of students and colleagues.

Reward ceremonies and plaques are inexpensive but effective. It is recognition that really motivates employees. Money and benefits keep them on the job, but they do not invigorate nor do they exhilarate. It is the "pat on the back," the praise, the acknowledgment of a job well done that really ignite the human potential.

For educators, the need for recognition may well be greater than for tradesmen or artisans who create a visible, tangible product, look over their work, and see when they have done well. Feedback is vital, and award ceremonies celebrating teaching excellence are special ways to reward classroom excellence.

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UNDERSTANDING WHAT IT TAKES TO SUCCEED

I have taught mathematics for years and am amazed at how we continue to reinvent teaching, hoping to find the magic elixir that will help all students succeed in math, or at least improve retention rates. I have tried my share of teaching techniques, texts, styles, and models.

When I ask students about what attitudes and behaviors are beneficial, and even necessary, for success in college math courses, I am always surprised to learn what students do not know—for example, that attending every class meeting is essential to success. These discussion sessions remind me of a quote attributed to game show celebrity, Vanna White. When asked what was important in her job, she answered, "Well, you have to know the alphabet really, really well."

As obvious as that knowledge is, I suspected that perhaps the obvious needed to be spelled out. So I developed an assessment tool to articulate the obvious. It allows students to define the attitudes and behaviors necessary to succeed in math class, but it could be modified for use in any discipline.

What makes this assessment useful is that students can quantify their behaviors and attitudes. Often, a student who has failed a test says: "But I studied all day Saturday for the test; I knew the material!" Even though I have discussed the importance of studying on a daily basis, the impossibility of concentrating "all day long," and other common myths, students often cannot grasp the fundamentals of achieving success without more direct instruction.

Directions for creating and scoring a self-assessment for students in a math class follow (and are easily adapted to other disciplines). This assessment can be a whole-class or small-group process and should be conducted soon after the course begins.

First, student groups submit a list of the attitudes and behaviors they believe characterize successful college students. Results are compiled and distributed to the class; the class discusses the list and organizes the attitudes and behaviors within the following categories:

1. In-class style
2. Out-of-class style
3. Study-group style
4. Physical style
5. Attitudes toward self and math

Creating the Assessment

Create a recipe by which each student can earn a grade of B or better. Ask students to assign a percentage to each category that indicates its importance. Percentages should total 100% to the total effort.

After making the list and assigning percentages, students should create a table that summarizes all of the information. Make copies to distribute at the next class meeting or have students download from your webpage. Students can now score themselves over a one- to three-week period, recording how often their behavior meets the established guidelines.

Examples from each category might include:

1. **In-class style**
    - Attends class
    - Sits in the front half of the room
    - Is prepared with text, paper, pencils and markers, and calculator and calculator manual
    - Has homework ready
    - Asks at least two questions each class

2. **Out-of-class style**
    - Has a specific time and place to study math
    - Reads the text before class and meets to discuss the section
    - Solves problems three or four times each week
    - Makes notes while reading the section
    - Has an organized notebook

3. **Study-group style**
    - Meets with study group one to two times each week
    - Spends at least 80% of the time with the study group discussing and solving problems; less than 20% of the time spent socializing
    - Is prepared with questions and has done the

homework problems before meeting the study group
- Is on time for the study group
- Attends every group study session
- Participates by asking and answering questions in study group
- Asks members of the group if they have questions, especially the quiet members
- Although s/he may have a strong opinion about how a problem or project is to be done, is willing to listen to others' opinions
- Does his/her fair share of any group problem or project

4. **Physical style**
   - Gets enough sleep so s/he can concentrate
   - Eats breakfast and lunch so s/he has enough energy to think
   - Exercises enough to be able to sit and concentrate

5. **Attitude toward self and math**
   - Sees math as a challenge
   - Enjoys trying to solve problems
   - Sees getting a problem wrong as an additional challenge
   - Sees risk-taking as positive
   - Is not embarrassed by saying something that is incorrect
   - Knows that s/he is intelligent and capable, and is able to learn and understand math

Scoring

Have students score themselves over the next week according to how often these behaviors occurred, using the following system:

Almost always	5 points
Frequently	4 points
Sometimes	3 points
Occasionally	2 points
Rarely or Never	1 point

Tabulating Data

To tabulate the data, students should:

1. total their scores for each category
2. calculate the possible score for each category (five times the number of items in each category)
3. divide each score by the possible score in that category (the percent of compliance for each category)
4. multiply by the percentage that category represents
5. total all points from all categories to determine the percent of appropriate behaviors for each student.

Ask the class to predict class grades based on the behavior all students are exhibiting.

Predicting Grades

Collect a score from each student, and compare this score to his/her final course grade. For your own purposes, conduct a regression analysis on assessment and course scores to determine any strong positive correlations. Conducting this exercise again midway through the course would make for an interesting discussion about behaviors, as well.

A Magic Elixir

It may be a grandiose idea to think that a young, or an inexperienced, or a self-defeating student could become enlightened and catapulted down the road to college success. I guess that hopefulness is now, and always will be, a part of teaching. That is one of the magic elixirs of the profession, and I think we are under its spell...forever.

Gail Small Ferrell, *Professor, Mathematics*

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CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT: A STRATEGY TO MEET URBAN EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

A desire to collaborate with area high schools and enhance student learning led a team of urban community college leaders to design and implement a successful concurrent enrollment program in less than one year. A series of meetings involving administrators from high schools (that currently provided 50 or more first-year students to the college annually) and Santa Monica College representatives outlined courses the college could offer. Response was overwhelming and resulted in partnerships with 17 area high schools and an enrollment of 676 students during the program's first semester. So far, the program has served more than 2000 high school students in the Los Angeles area.

The individuals who led this project identified important strategies for initiating a concurrent enrollment program. Although this college is situated in a large metropolitan area, these same concepts can be employed by virtually any community college.

In this case, the program was established and implemented by a college team charged with building a foundation program. This cross-functional team included members of the faculty and representatives from planning and development, student affairs, and academic affairs. Carefully communicating student goals aided in creating a program plan, evaluating outcomes, and garnering campuswide support.

Involving a variety of stakeholders at the college and the high schools from the strategy's inception was a key element. Planning and implementation included college and high school department chairs, faculty, counselors, admissions representatives, and administrators. Each high school provided an on-site liaison to coordinate academic calendars, facility requirements, instructional needs, and organizational procedures. Prior to developing a plan, it was important to address policy and procedural issues that might create barriers, including difficulties regarding attendance reporting, transcripts, schedules, and other related issues. The college facilitated the admissions and registration by providing an admissions/registration liaison to each high school. These individuals, trained in all aspects of the college admission and registration process, provided the necessary information to instructors regarding class rosters, drop deadlines, final grades, and other related procedures. The college provided support through the assignment of an outreach liaison to each high school in order to facilitate direct communication.

A test program of at least one semester of limited offerings at each high school proved beneficial. Program expansion could then be managed in future semesters, while considering the specific needs of each high school. A formal feedback session for college and high school officials was a viable way to evaluate the program.

The success of this program has been attributed, in part, to the focus on enhancing high school curriculum, enriching students' knowledge, and creating students who are better prepared for college. The concurrent enrollment program is not designed to compete with or supplant high school curriculum. Considering the unique needs of each high school's student population has been essential to creating a collaboration that is well-received and courses that are useful additions to the high school's programs. For example, a high school with a strong life science curriculum and advanced placement courses in that discipline may not need college-level biology classes. In contrast, a high school without a physics professor or with limited art offerings may want courses in these disciplines.

One factor to consider in planning to implement a concurrent enrollment program is developing course packages, in advance, to provide each high school with a realistic view of curricular offerings that can be delivered at off-site locations. Packages should include transportability of the class, availability of faculty in specific disciplines, and geographic constraints of the instructors. Offering the broadest set of options to high school decision-makers will afford choice and opportunity to match needs with available services.

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Focusing on Quality and Student

One of the primary goals of the concurrent enrollment program is to provide college-level instruction that is representative of the same quality and academic rigor afforded to students enrolled in classes on the college campus. Every attempt should be made to schedule the high school-based classes in a manner consistent with the college's schedule of classes. This allows students to gain the experience of a college scheduling pattern and prevents overlaps in an instructor's daily schedule. All college-level classes are offered outside of the students' regular high school class day. Students enrolling in concurrent courses are assessed by the same measurement tools used for all entering students at the college. The results of the assessment are used for counseling and placement. College personnel work closely with high school counselors to identify interested students and students who demonstrate potential for success in college-level course work.

One goal of the program has been to minimize expense for the participating high school students; as a result, many disadvantaged urban youth have gained access to college-level courses. The college's commitment to this goal resulted in waivers of all tuition and fees for participating students. Textbooks are the responsibility of the student; however, the college has developed a pool of funds to assist financially needy students with the purchase of books, and the college bookstore has donated earlier editions of books. High school administrators have used discretionary funds, booster club funds, and other traditional fund-raising efforts to purchase books to loan.

Faculty who participate in the concurrent program must meet the same hiring qualifications for any incoming college faculty. Many who elect to teach in the program are already affiliated with the college as full-time or adjunct faculty members.

Measuring the Results

Students evaluate their instructors at the end of each semester, just as they would on the college campus. At the end of the pilot semester, college administrators host a feedback session with high school representatives to discuss program outcomes. This collaboration has led to the improvement of student recruitment strategies and the development of new offerings.

The college academic departments provide evaluations of the participating faculty members in a manner consistent with campus guidelines and the conditions of their employment with the college. Additionally, ongoing contact between campus liaisons, administrators, and faculty provides opportunities for sharing timely information and improving the program.

A follow-up study at the end of the first semester indicated that concurrent course completion rates, course success rates, and grade point averages were reflective of the college student population at-large.

Reaping the Benefits

Within a one-year period, this urban community college implemented a program that developed meaningful K-12 partnerships, assisted in meeting the educational needs of the community, and established greater communication and articulation between K-12 faculty. Additionally, the program has enhanced high school curricula while decreasing students' time and cost. Faculty members reported they gained a greater sense of K-12 educational issues and developed a deeper understanding of urban issues in general.

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TRAINING INSTRUCTORS TO TEACH ONLINE

In spring 2000, Bronx Community College/The City University of New York offered a web-based distance learning course for the first time, entitled Introduction to the Internet and Web Page Development. As part of the collegewide Faculty Development Initiative Program (FDIP) in Technology, a faculty workshop and a discussion forum were created to support online teaching. At the workshop, faculty accessed the CUNY networked system and received a step-by-step guide for building course components, including planning, layout, typing materials, learning the management program, and adapting materials from conventional classrooms for online use. The BCC faculty development process helped enhance pedagogical theory related to distance learning; increased faculty members' technical skills and improved their mastery of distance learning technologies; explored the potential of online communication, collaboration, interactivity; and covered other relevant topics.

Step One: Learning CourseInfo from Blackboard Features

We use CourseInfo (from Blackboard Inc.), a tool for creating web-based courses that runs on any operating system. It is a structured software program that allows any content expert to load materials and create discussion questions, assignments, and quizzes. Faculty have complete control over creating websites, adding content, and administering user accounts and security on the site. The most important component in step one is the demonstration of online courses during which new faculty can see what a complete course looks like.

Course materials can be Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) text, audio, video, Word documents, or PowerPoint presentations. At the workshop, faculty are given user names and passwords, and introduced to the program, including tools of the CourseInfo template:

- Announcements: information faculty want students to see immediately
- Course Information: course description, objectives, evaluation, standards, calendar, required materials, and quick tips
- Staff Information: e-mail address, office hours, and other important information that students will need
- Course Documents: weekly lecture notes
- Assignments: weekly assignments and activities
- Communication: tools with which instructors and students can contact students via e-mail, conduct a chat, and participate in online discussions including private, small-group discussions
- Student Tools: the DropBox, used to exchange files, uploads files from a disk or a computer to a central location for downloading to work locally
- External Links: links to sites that encourage student inquiry and research
- Control Panel: a site editing and administration area for instructors including assessment, grading, recording student log-in dates, times, and activities

Step Two: Converting Traditional Course Material for the Web

CourseInfo allows the instructor to construct the materials for the course website without learning HTML. Faculty develop their syllabus, class schedule (15 weeks), weekly assignments, and weekly class notes. Course documents are to be completed on the day the course starts, but they are to be posted on a weekly basis and integrated into communication and assessment activities.

Faculty can decide if their courses will be asynchronous or will require a real-time component. They can be available to their students at scheduled times online through e-mail and virtual chat. Many options and resources are available in an online environment to provide a rich learning experience for students.

Students do as well in distance learning as in physical classrooms *if* they are carefully chosen and advised of the characteristics of a successful distance learner, including being a strong self-starter, self-disciplined, knowledgeable of the technology requirements of the specific format, and able to meet other students and faculty in a virtual environment (not face-to-face).

Step Three: Implementation/Course Management

The Initial Class Meeting: A necessary and vital component of an online course is the initial meeting with students, during which faculty can review the course objectives, layout and syllabus, expected outcomes, instructional materials, course schedule (weekly assignments/activities), and the CourseInfo program. A UserId and password, e-mail account, and information about browsers and Internet access are assigned and discussed.

Interaction: Responsiveness is the key to successful courses. Engaging students online is facilitated by adding interactivity to a course. Interactivity comes from the interplay between course documents, communication tools, and assessment tools. When faculty add a new course document, they are posting a new topic in the communication that refers to the document and may create a quiz or survey in the assessment area that measures the student's critical understanding of the information in the document. Common ways to add interactivity that are unique to the online experience include announcements, e-mail, discussion board, and chat. The following strategies have increased participation and learning.

- Make class participation a significant part of the students' grades (30%). Communicate expectations as to acceptable quality and quantity of participation. For example, students may be required to respond to a question the instructor poses and to the responses of at least two other students.
- Notify students of changes in assignments or due dates, and highlight new information on your site.
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- Group projects using e-mail, chat rooms, and group page will improve group collaborative experiences.

Evaluation: The CourseInfo testing feature allows the instructor to schedule exam dates and time restrictions. Students have a limited time to log on and take tests. The testing feature offers automatic grading of future tests and posting of grades to an online gradebook. A variety of materials can be used for evaluating students and determining grades, including peer-reviewed work, class discussion responses, and writing samples.

Conclusion

Online courses, using this model, allow for greater access to courses as time and place constraints are removed. However, faculty spend more time preparing the first few versions of an online course when the medium is new and they must adapt or adopt new strategies, new technologies, and effective teaching strategies.

Well-designed and carefully implemented online instruction can provide an effective educational environment and be an enjoyable experience for students and instructors—especially if the students are motivated and self-disciplined and the instructor maintains continuous interaction with them.

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RESEARCHING CULTURAL ARTIFACTS

The textbook for my western humanities survey course covers significant cultural developments in religion, philosophy, literature, music, visual arts, and their historical settings, from approximately 1400 to 1900 A.D., in one-half inch of an 8 1/2 x 11-inch textbook! With such a daunting amount of material to cover and a textbook that can devote only two paragraphs to Rembrandt and four to Mozart, I found myself seeking a context that would connect this vast collection of people, places, things, and events to a framework relevant to my students. The words of an old Simon and Garfunkel tune, "The Dangling Conversation," tormented me:

> And you read your Em'ly Dickinson,
> and I my Robert Frost,
> And we note our place with book markers
> that measure what we've lost.

With each exam, I felt certain that we had marked, measured, and lost another century.

A few semesters ago I hit upon an introductory lesson that helps students better understand how the events we cover are linked and related, that they are not arbitrary events plucked from thin air. The lesson is a delightful icebreaker that helps set a collaborative tone for the rest of the semester. Additionally, it gives me a handy frame of reference for future lectures, discussions, and exams.

I give students our definition of culture for the semester: "Culture is the sum of human endeavors, including the basic political, economic, and social institutions, and the values, beliefs, and arts of those who share them." We discuss in some detail the components of the definition. I ask them to think of things we teach our children, such as what and what not to eat, how to behave around strangers, and how to read signs in nature. There is an element of survival skills in cultural traditions.

Thomas Sowell, in discussing cultural diversity and change, observed: "Every culture discards over time the things which no longer do the job or which don't do the job as well as things borrowed from other cultures." We use Arabic numbers instead of Roman numerals, for example, because Arabic numbers work better. That is, we *select*, based on rational principles, what we will teach to succeeding generations.

Then I ask students to compile a list of images they have of the 1940s. When they have finished the 1940s, they are directed to complete a list for each succeeding decade, listing at least five items for each.

Then students gather into small groups, small enough that students can talk freely among themselves. When students have formed their groups and completed introductions, they choose a recorder and a spokesperson, and compile their individual lists into one, with no more than eight items per decade. They always spend quite a bit of time discussing whether the first space flight took place in the 1950s or the 1960s, when the women's movement began, and what music and hair styles were popular in their junior high school days. To keep things moving, I give them a 20-minute time limit, which I usually have to extend.

When time is called, I ask the spokesperson from each group to read its list of 1940s images. I record the items in a column on the board, using different colors of chalk or markers to differentiate the decades. Each group reads its list for the decade under discussion. By the time the last group has its turn, typically all of its items have already been listed. So that group reads first for the 1950s. Eventually, we get to the present. A typical set of lists includes:

1940s

WWII
baby boom
women-to-work
Holocaust
Einstein
atom bomb
swing music

1950s

rock-n-roll
Cold War
TV
Korean War

Elvis
traditional families
drive-ins
poodle skirts

1960s

space race
Vietnam
hippies
drugs/pot
Malcolm X
JFK
MLK
color TV
Beatles

1970s

Woodstock
bell-bottoms
women's movement
peace protests
Nixon/Watergate
disco
sexual revolution

1980s

computers
Reagan
Berlin Wall
alternative music
AIDS
Challenger
MTV
terrorism

1990s

Clinton and associates
David Koresh
Gulf War
Mother Theresa
cloning
Princess Di
Internet
school violence
environment

After all lists are compiled, I ask students if they *personally* remember any of the events in the '40s or '50s, and the answer is usually "no" because few of my students were alive in those decades. So I ask how they learned about these events. Books, television, and parents are the usual answers. I continue: "Out of all the things that were happening in the 1940s, for example, why did someone decide to teach you about these particular things?" We discuss their answers in the context of our definition of culture.

Eventually, we come to the conclusion that what they have learned about the 1940s almost exclusively came from textbooks and are things important to future survival. Textbook authors hope that future generations will not repeat mistakes of the past—a critical survival skill. Most items from the 1950s have been learned from television—e.g., from *Happy Days*. They represent what we enjoy and what we idealize. Ideals and fun events are also important elements in life and are among the things we try to leave for our children.

As a final exercise, I ask students to look at the lists and place asterisks by all items that they would want to *force* their children and grandchildren to learn. Poodle skirts always drop out, but atom bombs never do. With Elvis, there is usually a debate.

And so, we return to our one-half inch of textbook space and my conclusion. "The editors of your textbook had the task of choosing people, places, events, and artifacts from 500 years of Western culture. They chose things that made a difference, things that we can look back on and say, 'This changed us for better or for worse.' These are the things that they felt were important enough to force you to learn. Your job this semester will be to ask, 'Why is this so important?' and to keep asking until you understand why it is."

It is gratifying to watch the nodding heads as students signal their comprehension. For the moment, at least, they have drawn relationships between history and cultural artifacts. And, they have thought of themselves as transmitters of history and culture to succeeding generations.

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NISOD INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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ON TREATING STUDENTS AS ADULTS

During winter quarter, 1988, I taught a distance education class on communication theory over our university's COM-NET system, a combination of a telephone conference call with 12 remote sites and audiographics (electronic chalkboard and slow-scan video). I found that maintaining the human element in the class presented a major challenge. One means of doing so was having students write short essays at the beginning of class, while roll was called, asking them to share feelings on paper about something that would catch their personal interest.

I had been teaching the class for nearly one month, and a certain degree of rapport was building among class members. Then in the fourth week of class, just prior to the class beginning, I received an unexpected telephone call informing me that Carol, a student at a remote site, had been diagnosed with leukemia, had begun treatment, and died unexpectedly from sudden hemorrhaging. Her death came as a shock to me and to classmates at her site in rural Utah, and at other sites as well. Announcing her death was one of the hardest things I experienced as a teacher over distance education, or in my teaching career, for that matter, because it was impossible to read the reactions of students at other sites. Carol had participated in class the previous week and was suddenly gone. But I felt that I had to inform class members of the situation, and I did so as tastefully as I knew how. Since that time, her short presence in my class has been a cause for reflection.

During the week prior to her death, class members had written a short essay on this assigned topic: If you were called to testify before a university subcommittee investigating COM-NET regarding what you had learned thus far in the Communication Theory class, what insights about medium and message would you share?

I had read these essays, commented on them, and was about to return them to the students. But I kept the last one from Carol and have reflected upon its contents since that time. It was a brief statement, probably dashed off in ten minutes or less. What made it noteworthy was its finality as the last statement from a capable student.

Carol had written about the evolution of her experience with the telecommunication system, how her first two classes, scheduled in workshop fashion with large blocks of time, had been "an experiment in the macabre." She told of her frustration in being told that one class required a prospectus of the student's Creative Project.

> "...I'll never forget the comment of the professor when he said, 'It doesn't matter what you write the prospectus on for this class; it's just practice for you when you write the real one.' That class was a total waste and very frustrating.
>
> From then on, COM-NET evolved with professors trying various methods, and finally coming to the point we're at now of using the system to its maximum potential. It's great and I feel as good about anything I've learned over COM-NET as any undergraduate class I took on campus. But I'm a little concerned about the paranoia displayed by some [professors on campus] who say students are abusing the system. Please give us credit for being adult enough to know what to do and how to act in class."

Some of the specific elements mentioned in Carol's essay reflected on aspects of our use of the COM-NET system. I knew that the earlier class, arranged in workshop fashion, had been difficult; I had talked with the other instructor that quarter and learned of his frustration with the imposed format. Unfortunately, that was Carol's first quarter. The later classes reflected a growing level of experience among instructors in using the technology, eventually becoming more comfortable with its use. The concern some professors had about abuse of the system stemmed from skepticism about operating over such a distance and relying so much on student initiative; faculty members who had not tried it were particularly concerned. They doubted that it could be as effective as the tried-and-true, on-campus instruction.

THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR STAFF AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (NISOD) ◦ Community College Leadership Program
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From my own experience, both on and off campus, I knew that the level of quality for courses varied considerably, but that it was possible to teach a course that was equal to and sometimes superior to the distance education system.

However, more than the specific concerns about the local distance education system, there is a message that should come through for all college or university teachers, or trainers in business and industry, when working with adults:

- Give them credit for being adults. Realize that they have families and jobs and many responsibilities.
- Give them assignments that connect with the realities they face.
- Expect good work, but understand when things don't always work out exactly as planned.
- Remember that we are more than names on a roll or voices over a speaker phone.
- And finally, realize that experiments with distance educational technology make qualitative differences in people's lives and that we as teachers are ethically responsible to make those experiences the best that we can.

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THE SPECIALTY SPEECH

One of the most difficult problems in teaching a public speaking class is the lack of time to cover all of the material and to have students speak as often as they should. In an introductory course, students must develop their speaking skills by describing, informing, and persuading—the first three speeches that are standard in most public speaking courses. For the students' fourth speech, however, I've assigned the "specialty" speech.

The specialty speech is different from the others in several respects. Most notably, it's the only speech for which I choose the topic—actually, students draw their assignments from a hat. I tell them that in the outside world they may be required to speak on subjects about which they have little knowledge. So far, topics have ranged from presenting a status report to speaking on television.

To gather the information they need, students are required to research their subject as well as cite their references during the course of the speech. This requirement not only moves them up a level on the taxonomic scale, but it allows them to discover and share with the class the wealth of information available on public speaking topics.

The information that the students share and my comments on each subject allow the class to cover a wide range of subjects in the limited time that we're together. Feedback has been positive, and the knowledge students have shared has been extensive.

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HISTORY CAN BE "FAR AFIELD"

Central Carolina Technical College offers students in American Studies (AS) numerous unique opportunities for studying history. Two AS courses provide field school experiences that may be used to meet program, university transfer, and/or teacher recertification requirements. Each course carries three semester hours and combines classroom and on-site instruction.

"The Colonial Experience" (AS I) and "South Carolina During the Civil War" (AS II) are each limited to 12 participants and last approximately five weeks. Students pay regular tuition, with no additional fees assessed for participation. The content of each course includes history, geography, geology, archaeology, sociology, and historic preservation issues.

Both courses are approximately 40% classroom instruction/discussion/guest lecture and approximately 60% instructional time spent "on the road" to tour sites, meeting with on-site personnel and participating in group exercises. An extended syllabus is utilized for both classes, and directed readings are assigned throughout the course. Classes meet in a Friday/Saturday format, with classroom activities scheduled for Fridays and touring generally completed on Saturdays.

Students have unique opportunities to tour private homes and sites, as well as receive personal attention on group tours. Visitations include such diverse sites as colonial and antebellum plantation homes, early churches, historical botanical gardens, battlefield sites, and significant commercial enterprises, such as the Charleston Tea Plantation. Students visit a general store that has been in operation continuously since the early 1800's by the LeNoir Family of Horatio, South Carolina; and observe the start-to-finish production of a broom by Susan Simpson, of Boykin, South Carolina, as she works in a restored 1770's slave cabin. They follow the progress of the Massachusetts 54th Regiment as soldiers made their way from Fort Wagner (Charleston Harbor) to the burial of four members of the regiment at the National Cemetery in Florence, South Carolina—a Civil War "death camp" rivaling Andersonville. National historic and affiliated sites, such as Fort Sumter and Historic Camden, and the South Carolina State Museum and the Sumter County Museum prove invaluable in bringing history to life. Students visit area archives, including Sumter County Genealogical and Historical Research Center and the Camden Archives, to learn more about research and documentation.

Students are required to produce a journal which includes their responses to specific questions over course content and represents 40% of the course grade. Journals are individualized projects; photographs, articles, brochures, artwork, poetry, maps, interviews, and any related materials that chronicle the field school experience may be included. Journals are returned, so students are encouraged further to invest time and resources to create a personalized, quality production.

Students also are required to prepare a research paper for 40% of the course grade. The topic selected must be appropriate to the time period and content area of the course. The remaining 20% of the course grade is the final exam—students review highlights of their research with fellow classmates, sharing the specialized research and completing the course.

Students have researched diverse subjects, including medical practices during the Civil War; the development of churches and the growth of religious denominations in the Carolina Backcountry; South Carolina leaders, Thomas Sumter and Francis Marion, and their roles during the American Revolution; the various roles played by women (including spies, pirates, managers, authors, and caregivers); the study of Native Americans' and African-Americans' roles in both the American Revolution and the Civil War; and the impact of transportation and development along the King's Highway, extending from Charleston, South Carolina, to Charlotte, North Carolina.

The exposure to local/regional history and the relationships emphasized in these courses has promoted the popularity of the classes. Local and regional historians and participants donate time, knowledge, and facilities to provide an optimum learning experience. The courses generally draw students from a variety of academic areas, enriching the total course experience.

Instructors providing field school experiences benefit from on-site visitations and opportunities. Viewed as a "return to industry" concept, field schools can provide academic institutions with direct contacts, exposure for students and programs, and a one-of-a-kind educational and community partnering experience.

Kay M. Stockbridge, *Instructor, History and Political Science*
Raymond M. Watkins, *Chair, Humanities and Social Sciences*

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"MANAGING IT ALL": A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH FOR ALLIED HEALTH PROGRAMS

Keeping track of a modern-day allied health program, with increasing numbers of student learning surveys and research-based accreditation demands, becomes more difficult each year. I have developed a 10-point process that allows me to stay current with all major aspects of our physical therapist assistant program, an outgrowth and marriage of student outcomes and continuous quality improvement concepts.

The 10 areas under consideration contain a plan and report for:

- internal student learning outcomes
- curriculum review
- student selection and grading
- lab testing and lab practice methods
- clinical site review, skills, and ACCE forms
- generic abilities review
- essential (terminal outcomes) review
- books and supplies review
- lab equipment and chemical safety review
- personnel/clinical instructor development.

The 10 areas are plotted on a grid—a visual check-off for the periodic reviews of each area. We conduct a review every January, and the report is passed along to all staff members and the division director. Some program areas are more prone to fail, or change, or are more vital, so these have been selected for closer monitoring. For example, student learning and essential outcomes, clinical sites and skills, lab safety, and personnel development are reviewed annually, whereas generic abilities and curriculum are reviewed every other year.

A typical snapshot of headings within a sample area include:

- title or area
- origination date
- frequency of report
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- procedure for utilizing feedback
- current year's report.

Advantages of this "bird's-eye view" of the program are tremendous. Specifically, the system helps the director keep track of all areas on a prioritized, periodic basis. Once the initial problems are identified, the only part of the report that changes is the year-to-year update, unless new problems arise during a review. In addition, some reports may be combined with others—e.g., student learning outcomes committees and accreditors. Because each area within the systematic check is in a separate file on the computer's hard drive, selecting the desired areas requiring modification is more efficient and avoids wading through the entire 10-point report.

Sam M. Coppoletti, *Director, PTA Program*

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NISOD INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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TRACING THE FAMILY TREE: MEETING THE RESEARCH AIM IN COMPOSITION

My own interest in tracing my family tree began when my grandfather passed away in 1993, leaving my grandmother as the closest link to my ancestry. I discovered some very old family portraits and photographs when sorting through my grandparents' belongings. Some of the pictures were of my grandparents in their youth. While I could not identify other subjects in the photographs, I could piece together my own reflection in one person's eyes and another person's smile. These people staring back at me, dressed in clothing from another era, were unmistakably part of my genetic makeup. Even though the photographs sparked my interest, I didn't feel the time was right to discuss the faces and the contexts of the settings. I waited until the weekend of July 4, 2000, to sit down with my grandmother and spread the photographs on her kitchen table.

With the information I gathered from the hours spent with her, I started tracing my family tree. While developing my faculty website, I began scanning the old photographs and building pages and links. My website allows my students to view a sample family tree and to link to other website resources.

Writing about Trees

The research paper requirements are simple. Students must trace either their maternal or paternal side back three generations, counting themselves as one generation. They must cite sources and make connections between events in their families to events in history. For example, my grandfather was a veteran of World War II. As I write about his experiences in the war, I cite sources detailing facts or figures in the broader scope of this historically significant period. If students cannot make their own historical connections, they may choose to discuss major trends, such as in technology.

I am aware of the sensitive nature of using private lives as subject matter for course papers, so I give students the option of choosing another assigned research topic of equal breadth and depth. But, most students choose the family research paper to share their personal narratives and perspectives of major events in history.

Other sensitive issues include the following:

• *Students in my classroom come from diverse ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious backgrounds.* If they feel their family tree has been marred by events in history such as slavery or the Holocaust, they may react strongly. Before beginning library research they should try to be as objective as possible about factual information, but I urge them to express their own thoughts and feelings, too. Students usually appreciate the chance to discuss historical events from different perspectives than those in textbooks.

• *Students may be adopted and not know their biological parents.* This assignment typically does not send students on a quest to find information about their biological parents, nor would the semester provide enough time to meet the assignment's requirements. Instead, most students who have been adopted choose to focus on the parents who have adopted them.

• *Students have divorced biological parents and come from blended families.* Many students discuss the divorce of their parents as a "trend" or reality of the times, although not necessarily an event in history. Some have been able to place their parents' divorces, or their own, in the context of statistics describing the phenomenon of divorce in this country.

• *Students have no idea where to start.* They go to my website and see how I began my project. We take a tour of the library and search reference tools with the help of the reference librarians. I provide students with a blank tree to be completed with names, dates, and relationships, and submitted with their papers.

The goal of fulfilling the research component of this course is met upon completion of the project. Students become more interactive with historical timelines, making connections between global events and their own family units. Some even walk away from this course with a new hobby, having caught the genealogy "bug" and wanting to do more advanced family research. Family tree research is a valuable opportunity to identify an exciting new interest.

Michele N. Costanza, *Adjunct Associate Professor*

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PREPARING TO TEACH ONLINE COURSES

Interest in online courses for the delivery of higher education has increased significantly and reflects the current challenges of increased operating costs, decreasing traditional student enrollments, fewer traditional financial support streams, and the like. Yet, online delivery also offers faculty an opportunity to enhance educational collaboration with peers at their own and other community colleges.

We studied the learning strategies of faculty preparing to teach online. Three forms of learning emerged: informal, incidental, and experiential. *Informal learning* occurred when faculty (a) accessed resources; (b) learned from mentors or role models, and discussed with peers; (c) researched the Internet and reviewed others' courses online; and (d) learned as a result of a specific need or response. *Incidental learning* occurred with hands-on experiences. Faculty learned computer skills and multitasking techniques. They also learned by trial and error, by listening and discussing with colleagues and peers. *Experiential learning* occurred in workshops, attending conferences, and from past experiences. Faculty sharpened their computer skills through insight and knowledge.

The "non-knowledge base of technology" did not deter faculty from learning online delivery. Faculty felt secure in their content areas, and they were excited about learning something new. Self-directed learners were proactive in their learning, had an experimental attitude about trying new behaviors and testing out new ideas, and actively sought out resources to help with their online course delivery methods.

Benefits/Impact

Faculty need to support, share, and work together as teams while learning about online delivery. Sharing successes, failures, and frustrations encourages cohesiveness and provides learning opportunities in a timely manner.

Faculty who choose to learn online course delivery report that time commitments are inordinate, compensation is not equal to that for traditional classroom instruction, and campus workloads are not lightened because of this new method of reaching students. Yet, faculty who learned online learning early on were proud to be among the pioneers in this new field.

Our study documented that (a) learning is a process – no matter one's age or position; (b) learning is a process of improvement for one's self-worth and marketability; (c) faculty are active learners and share through collaboration, responsibility, and mutual respect for each other; (d) the learning process revolves around a community of learning; and (e) learning strategies are varied and flexible, based upon individual learning needs.

Faculty should learn about theories, concepts, and instructional designs prior to designing and/or teaching an online course. Opportunities to develop and manage an online course under the guidance of a lead instructor are especially useful, as well.

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NISOD INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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COMBINING LITERATURE AND TECHNOLOGY

For several years now I have been interested in using technology as a tool in the classroom. Like many others, the problem for me became one of process vs. content. I struggled with what to leave out of my syllabus in order to make room for the instruction students would need. In addition, I had doubts about the overall value of using media, for instance, in teaching analysis; but I knew that the students would be more interested in analyzing a television show than they would a short story. I decided to combine my love of literature with my curiosity about using technology. The challenge for me was to ensure that the skills that I thought were valuable in a literature class would get just as much attention while the students were watching television and reading advertisements as they would in a traditional literature course.

Fortunately, each time I would try a new approach, I would learn something of value. I became interested in issues that affected both males and females, and that interest led me to issues about the family: how it has changed, why it has changed, how real our perceptions were of the family of the past, and how real our expectations are of the family of today or the future. This interest, combined with my growing interest in how students learn, became a catalyst for a new and different course that focused on family issues.

A Different Course

In this course, in addition to reading short stories, plays, and poetry, we examine how the family is portrayed in other media. The course—Family Matters in Literature, Television and Advertising—is arranged chronologically. First, we read short stories written in the '50s and early '60s, analyzing and examining how families looked then. We make inferences about the roles of males and females, based on our readings and television shows that are specifically about families' lives, problems, and solutions. We watch the early "Ozzie and Harriet," "I Love Lucy," "The Honeymooners," and "Andy Griffith" shows. We look at how the images changed from genre to genre. Looking for pervasive images, we begin to discover the stereotypes inherent in the stories. Before moving on, we examine commercials—mostly television commercials—and a few print ads. We analyze the messages the ads convey and try to determine to whom an ad is pitched. Using our constructed list of stereotypical traits, we identify ways in which the ads either reinforced or undermined these stereotypes.

In the second section of the course, we use literature, domestic comedies, and advertisements from the '70s and '80s. Before beginning our readings, we discuss and brainstorm historical events that took place between the '60s and '70s, paying particular attention to events that would influence the family. Following the former model, we make inferences about the values of the society of those decades, examining all of the texts for stereotypes. We determine if the stereotypes have persisted, changed, or disappeared; if they have changed, we note the ways in which they have changed. At this point in the semester, the students are applying literary terms and strategies to their discussions and analyses of the short stories, and applying those concepts to the texts of the television shows and the advertisements.

The final section of the course examines very recent literature, television shows, and advertisements. The last few classes are devoted to students' projects.

The Semester Project

In addition to completing the readings and analyzing ads and televisions shows, every student has to complete a semester project. Although the project has broad perimeters, each student must give an oral presentation as part of this project. The projects are fascinating and diverse. Some students choose to write a traditional research paper, some create storyboards for advertisements, and others make videos that contrast or compare television shows of the past and present. Some create visual or audio tapes of music to illustrate the values of the culture; some trace the evolution of a specific type of advertisement from the '50s to the present. One student, for instance, looked at how Marlboro has had to change the images in its ads in reaction to the anti-smoking campaigns of the '80s and '90s. Last year, some students examined the lyrics and images in several videos on MTV. They contrasted the lyrics and images with other music-video shows, one of which used an "oldies" video format and the other a country-western. They made their comparisons, taking into consideration the stereotypes that we had gathered.

Exposing students to critical thinking skills through various media does not mean that students cannot be exposed to traditional, classical texts. The confidence that they gain in their analysis skills will make their exposure to denser, possibly more difficult, texts less threatening.

It is important that faculty communicate to students the reasons that some texts have remained classics over time. Students learn most effectively when they can relate the material they are learning to their own lives. They can do this only if they learn to read all types of texts.

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NISOD INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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SPATIAL REASONING: A PREDICTOR FOR SUCCESS IN PHYSICS EDUCATION

A recent study of Albert Einstein's brain by Canadian scientist Sandra Witelson of McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, has found that his parietal lobe, a region of the brain's cerebral cortex, is 15% wider than that of the normal human brain. Her research also discovered that Einstein's brain had no parietal operculum—which allowed for the expansion of the parietal lobe. Other than these distinguishing features, Albert Einstein's brain is quite normal.

Scientists know that the brain's parietal lobe processes spatial reasoning—the ability to visualize, perceive, and mentally rotate three-dimensional images—and abstract thought. Einstein relied on these abilities to visualize space, time, and distance to develop his theories of relativity. Damage to the parietal lobes causes abnormalities in left-right orientation and map reading, and affects one's ability to do math, and ability to stay oriented in familiar places.

Research conducted at Rutgers University and Camden County College helped clarify the nature of the relationship between visual-spatial abilities and achievement in physics courses, and the influence visual-spatial abilities have on the high attrition rate in many introductory college-level physics courses. Findings suggested that spatial reasoning was important to success in college physics.

This research included three sections of introductory college-level physics (S=136) and one section of non-science liberal arts (S=52). Students received pre- and post-measures of visual-spatial ability in the areas of perception, orientation, and visualization. The greatest increases in visual-spatial abilities occurred in an experimental section that received spatial skills intervention—specifically, test items that utilized graphical form and were related to laboratory work. Substantial gains in visual-spatial ability were registered by control physics sections, also. These increases suggested that taking introductory physics improves visual-spatial abilities and that science teachers should balance laboratory experiments that depend on computer software with those that demand physical performance. Although students who withdrew from the course during this study demonstrated mathematics skills comparable to those who completed the course, their scores on spatial tests were appreciably lower.

Courses frequently cover an extensive range of subject matter and present content in an abstract and quantitative form—a characteristic of science courses, in general, and of introductory college-level physics, in particular. In these courses, the dropout and failure rates are uncommonly high. College physics courses rely heavily on drawings, diagrams, and graphs to present and analyze physical phenomena. The visual-spatial abilities of students exposed to spatial skills intervention, as well as those successfully completing a laboratory-based physics course, improved. Increases were realized in areas of perception, orientation, and visualization—the same skills that Einstein used to develop his theories of relativity.

Students' organization and analysis skills, and their skill in generating abstractions, must be developed. The processes associated with spatial-visual thought appear to be related closely to those involved in data analysis, as well as to those utilized in abstract representation. Elementary school educators should test for and develop spatial abilities in the early grades, followed by laboratory experiences to enhance them.

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COLLABORATION FOR CRITICAL THINKING

As I looked for ways to revamp my English I and II composition courses, I decided to throw out everything and start over. I chose six essays for each unit covering a different writing style. The first three were discussed in class; the discussions were divided into introductions and challenges. For example, I introduced an essay, "Sticks and Stones and Sports Team Names" (Estrada), by asking students to list three names used in Iowa that may be construed as racist. They created a lengthy list, including Hawkeye, Redskin, Brave, and Chickasaw. At this point we only had a list. I asked the class to respond to the following questions: How can an ethnic name be a slur and paradoxically admiring? What does the term "political correctness" mean? Have demeaning names "hurt" you at any time? What question would you like to ask the author?

Then, I divided the class into groups of five students each, let them work on their questions for 20 minutes, and then had them return for a group discussion. The students developed some personal responses to the essay that they could incorporate into their own writing. This procedure was followed in the next two class meetings as the class worked on a common essay.

The work produced for the second assignment was presented by student groups. Each group had an hour to convey the writing sense and style of an essay to the class. One group wrote 8-10 questions and asked the class for verbal responses; then chose a video clip that reflected the essence of the essay, a song that captured the essay's theme, and a work of art that conveyed the concept of the essay.

This group was discussing the essay "Sex Education in Our Schools" (Kuhn) and began with questions, including: When did you learn about sex? How did you learn about sex? What responsibility does the public school system have in teaching sex? What formal institutions (i.e., school, church) and what informal institutions (i.e., peers) are our sex education sources and teachers? After a 15-25 minute discussion on these questions and others asked by the audience, the group moved onto the film clips, an hilarious scene from *Varsity Blues* in which the high school sex education instructor is trying to be blunt and open in a humorous way about sex-ed terms and the human anatomy, not realizing that a number of male students were in the audience the previous night at the strip club where she moonlighted. This clip raised several questions. The students then turned to the song "Contact" from the musical *Rent*, which dealt with sex as a means of ownership. It produced a lively debate from emotional and political perspectives about how sex-ed should be taught. The group choose Goya's *The Naked Maja* to contrast sex as depicted in art in early centuries with sex in this millennium.

Then the group returned to the thesis of the essay, discussed how each of their presentations might be controversial today, and described parallel controversies in sex-ed programs. The presentation ended with each person in the group commenting on the essay and how current sex-ed programs mirrored or differed from the proposal in the essay. I assigned a group grade for each project, with the stipulation that if I felt a student was not participating sufficiently, I would adjust the grade.

Most preparation for presentations occurred in class; however, what could not be finished in class was completed when the group could arrange to meet. The results have developed critical thinking and are invigorating, challenging, student-centered, never boring, and a great way to realize the impact of the written word.

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NISOD INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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EXPLORING ENGLISH WEB SITES

Several years ago I entered a new teaching environment: classrooms equipped with Internet access for all students and computer projection devices for instructors. Soon, I realized that my methods of teaching developmental and program-level English would have to adapt to my surroundings.

Today, I explore English web sites with my students and observe their reactions. Which sites do they find attractive and accessible? Are these sites also credible, current, interactive, free? These qualities have become my criteria for evaluation.

As my students explore English web sites, I hope that they develop the critical thinking skills needed to evaluate any web site. Katherine Holmes has developed a web site evaluation exercise (http://www.lesley.edu/faculty/kholmes/libguides/eval.html), where students can critically assess the "merit" of sites such as Clones 'R Us and Whoopee, It's the White House! Maricopa Community College (http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/show/what/eval-act.html) also provides useful criteria for evaluation.

Initially, I find that students are drawn to attractive sites offering interactive quizzes. Perhaps the best of these sites, Guide to Grammar and Writing (http://webster.commnet.edu/HP/pages/darling/grammar/original.htm), belongs to Professor Charles Darling of Capital Community Technical College. This site features over 150 computer-graded quizzes, PowerPoint presentations, usage and grammar explanations, and tips for structuring essays and paragraphs. Clearly, this site has been beneficial to my students, to me, and to trees! For example, instead of duplicating handouts for subject-verb agreement or run-on sentences, I can project a colorful quiz on the screen, allow students to debate the correct answers, and provide instant feedback to their questions. Since students are required to vote on the correct answer to each question, their strengths and weaknesses soon become apparent and allow me to focus instruction. In addition, these quizzes reinforce my credibility: perhaps other authorities agree with my instruction!

Although few sites offer interactive quizzes and PowerPoint presentations, many provide ready access to information and handouts. Dr. Paul Brians, an English professor at Washington State University, offers Common Errors in English (http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/errors/index.html), a site allowing students to click on explanations of commonly confused words such as affect/effect or redundancies such as ATM machine. I ask students to use this site as a novel way to understand usage errors, although they could find the same information in their English handbooks. Another site, Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/), provides over 130 handouts with answer keys and includes such topics as punctuation, grammar, usage, rhetorical patterns, and research. As long as instructors acknowledge this source, they may use the handouts. I have cut and pasted exercises to Word documents to provide additional practice for my students—with no loss of paper!

Although hundreds of sites offer useful handouts and writing tips, I'll highlight only seven of them and apologize for not including more. The Paradigm Online Writing Assistant (http://www.powa.org/) discusses informal, argumentative, and exploratory essays. In addition, it offers useful tips for prewriting, creating a thesis statement, and providing support. Students can explore Brigham Young University's Writing Center (http://humanities.byu.edu/writingctr/Handouts/indexb.htm) for information about the writing process, punctuation, grammar, and research tips. The University of Richmond (http://www.richmond.edu/~writing/) provides prewriting activities and information about punctuation, sentence structure, and documenting sources. (Teachers interested in the Writing Across the Curriculum [WAC] philosophy might also check this site.) Offered through the University of Illinois, the Writer's Workshop (http://www.english.uiuc.edu/cws/wworkshop/index.htm) includes a grammar handbook and writing techniques. In addition, the Virginia Beach Campus of Tidewater Community

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College (http://www.tc.cc.va.us.writcent/index.htm) and George Mason University (http://www.gmu.edu/departments/writingcenter/handouts.html) offer handouts about grammar, punctuation, and the writing process.

Many of these sites also offer suggestions for writing research papers. Clearly, we want students to avoid Internet-lifted research papers and to steer clear of sites such as cheathouse.com, cyberessays.com, essay world.com, and others. We need to make them aware of the legitimate resources that they can access. One commercial site available through the Infonautics Corporation (http://www.Researchpaper.com) includes an extensive idea directory for writers. Columbia University Press has compiled a useful Guide to Online Style for both APA and MLA formats (http://columbia.edu/cu/cup/cgos/basic.html), just as Troy State University offers Citing the World Wide Web in Style (http://www.tsufl.edu/library/5/citation.htm). The Modern Language Association offers the only "official" online MLA site: (http://www.mla.org/).

Some sites simply provide a humorous look at language problems. We have all seen what spell check devices cannot detect, how homonym confusion and malapropisms have become rampant in our students' papers. As my students explore the Frank and Ernest comic strip site (www.frankandernest.com), they often chuckle at AnimalGrammar and discover malapropisms in Malaprop Man's archives: "Look! Up in the sky! It's absurd! It's inane! It's Malaprop Man! I'm going Hi-Trek! I bought this flaptop commuter and am joining the Inflammation Age! This has everything... Windex 98, Knee Mail, Smell Checker, and Food Processor! Now I smurf the Internet for evildoers floating around in ciderspace! And the only danger to me is getting carpool tunnel syndrome..."(Frank and Ernest, March 28, 1999).

Occasionally, we find humorous misplaced modifiers (church bulletin humor), malapropisms, and other bloopers in Superteach (http://webnz.com/checkers/Bloop2.html). In my more advanced classes, some students enjoy the weekly challenge of the Puzzler from National Public Radio: (http://www.npr.org/programs/wesun/puzzle).

Dictionary and thesaurus sites can be useful and occasionally entertaining. Merriam Webster offers these practical, user-friendly resources: http://www.m-w.com/thesaurus.htm and http://www.m-w.dictionary.htm. Lexico, a provider of language learning services, offers these commercial sites: http://www.dictionary.com and http://www.thesaurus.com. The dictionary site offers instant definitions, a Word-for-the-Day feature, a translation link, dated but revered resources such as Strunk's *Elements of Style*, and links to some of my favorite English sites.

Numerous sites offer hundreds of English links, but exploring these lists can be time-consuming and frustrating. The following sources were my "links" to the "links":

- Hansen, Randall, S. Indispensable Writing Resources. (http://www.stetson.edu/rhansen/writing.html).
- Larson, Gary B. Garbl's Grammar Guides Online. 22 (http //members.home.net.garbl/writing/).
- Madin, Mike. Academic Info:English Studies and ESL/EFL.(http://www.academicinfo.net/englang.html). (an independent educational directory supported by donations)
- National Council of Teachers of English. RTE Links Index. (http://www.ncte.org/rte/links/index.html).
- Stentor Communications. Language Sites on the Internet. (http://pw1.netcom.com/~rlederer/rllink.htm).

Garbl's Grammar Guides Online, updated on January 22, 2000, provided the most direct links to active sites.

As my teaching style evolves with technology, I am trying to avoid some of the inevitable pitfalls. I have tried to use Internet resources in moderation and to value classroom interaction more than interaction with the computer screen. I have learned the necessity of backup plans in case of computer failure and the importance of checking site addresses the day before using them in class: addresses change frequently! In addition, my students have learned that their textbooks may be more helpful and accessible for some tasks than quality Internet sites. On the other hand, I acknowledge that instruction with quality Internet sources appeals to traditional students and provides abundant teaching resources. With these resources, instructors may focus instruction more effectively and provide students with additional tools to become more independent and effective writers.

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RETAINING STUDENTS IN THE SCIENCES

Many students entering college for the first time are not ready to succeed in college-level science courses, irrespective of their major. Science educators at our college have observed that unsuccessful students in entry-level science courses often have inadequate basic skills, such as poor reading comprehension, weak computational skills, and insufficient writing abilities. We were curious about skills and skill levels that successful students brought to help them pass a beginning science course. We decided to study the grade distribution of students in entry-level biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy, geography, and geology courses in relation to their reading, writing, and math levels.

Our study was designed to answer this question: What reading, math, and writing levels are necessary for success with a grade of C or better in entry-level science courses? We also wanted to determine which combinations of math, reading, and writing levels are the best predictors of success.

We selected 248 students from 10 entry-level science courses, using a random-number-generating program. These courses included General Biology (Majors), Preparation for General Chemistry, Introductory Physics, Biology Concepts, Introductory Chemistry, Solar System (Astronomy 1), Physical Geography: Weather and Climate, Introductory Geology, Human Biology for Allied Health, and Fundamental Chemistry.

Five students from each grade category—A, B, C, D, and Y/F—were included for each course (in one chemistry course we found only three D students). Student withdrawals (W) were not used (as some non-academic reasons for withdrawal are possible). However, we did include the Y grade (instructor withdrawal) because some faculty prefer it to giving an F. We had 48% females and 52% males in the study, evenly distributed within the different ethnic groups: 59.7% White/others, 29.8% Hispanic, 4.4% Native-American, 3.2% Asian-American, and 2.8% African-American. This sample population reflected the ethnic composition of our college. Using a chi-square for analysis, we found no biases of ethnicity or gender by grade level.

The math, reading, and writing levels of these students were determined either by previous courses taken and passed with a C or better, or by a college-administered assessment test (reading assessment was the Nelson-Denny Reading Test; math and writing assessments were created internally by faculty).

We used a chi-square statistical analysis with cross-tabulations of variables in two-way tables to make group comparisons. This method was appropriate to the stratified random sample in which we investigated the relationship between past curricular experience and present science classroom performance. [This analysis reveals the probability of a relationship between two variables—for example, the relationship between previous math and current science grades.]

Reading level had a significant relationship with the five grade categories, indicating that the most successful science students performed well at the highest reading levels. More than 75% of all students reading at or above the 15th grade level were successful (C or better); and of all students reading at 13th or 14th grade level, 60.6% were successful.

Math level also had a significant relationship with the five grade categories; the most successful science students had completed a course above intermediate algebra. More than 75% of these students were successful; of all students completing only intermediate algebra, 60.4% were successful.

We also found a significant relationship between combined reading and math levels and success in the sciences. Students reading at the 13th grade or higher were much more successful in the sciences if they had completed a course above intermediate algebra. Of all students with this combination, 82.1% were successful.

We were unable to reach a firm conclusion about the influence of writing on success in the sciences. This may be due to the fact that nearly 75% of all students sampled were already at or above the Writing I level (freshman composition).

Our conclusion was that a combination of reading and math proficiency is a strong predictor of success in

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the sciences. The findings from our study indicated that students reading at least at 13th grade level who had completed a math course above intermediate algebra had an 82% success rate in their entry-level science class.

Recommendations

We recommend to interested students, counselors, and program planners that students enrolling in entry-level science courses should have:

- A minimum of 13th grade reading-level proficiency to enroll in entry-level science courses.
- Successful completion of a course at or above the intermediate algebra level before taking any entry-level science course.
- Successful completion of freshman composition or higher.

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CREATIVITY IN TESTING

Can testing be a learning tool, a medium for pooling ideas and concepts, or a situation where students can internalize information learned and retain more? Open-note and group tests can offer such learning opportunities.

Open-Note Tests

Some instructors argue that open-note tests compromise effectiveness because students do not have to learn the material—it is "all right there in front of them." Well, is it *really* there? How do we or our students know that their class notes will be useful resources? Students should be encouraged to take notes and given a method by which to judge the effectiveness of their note-taking. Review students' notes, make suggestions for improvement, lead students through note-taking exercises, and offer them opportunities to judge their note-taking methods. Employed early in the semester, this testing format allows time for students to diagnose, practice, and improve their techniques.

Group Tests

Students are either organized into assigned groups or choose their own. Students may work through exam questions with others or work individually and then share their results. In the group-testing format, students teach the procedures they use to work the problem, verbalizing their processes and results.

Students indicate that group testing reduces anxiety and increases their ability to concentrate. They report that in explaining problems to group members, they gain a better understanding of what they are doing, gain confidence in doing it, and feel proud of their performance.

Expanding Learning Opportunities

Not every test is appropriate for the group- or open-note format. However, the ultimate goal is achieving valuable learning outcomes that will continue beyond the classroom.

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ON CAMPUS/ONLINE: THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

After 32 years as a community college teacher, I recently discovered a delightful paradox that has changed the way I teach and the way I think about teaching: Certain tools for distance learning, when introduced into the traditional classroom, are also powerful tools for bringing students in traditional on-campus classes closer together. And best of all, the simplest online tools are often the most effective.

I teach classes in literature, philosophy, logic, and composition; but online forums, the topic of this article, can apply to almost any college class. And they are very easy to use—for teachers and students. The discussion forum allows the most harried student another opportunity to join the learning community. This is true even if the student has to join the discussion late at night when the children are finally asleep or after returning home from work shortly before midnight.

We hear a lot these days about the tremendous potential for high-speed, asynchronous communication. We are told that with the growth of broadband, high-speed access, educators will soon be doing all sorts of fantastic things online with voice, pictures, and text. But as great as that may be, we have something better right now—speed and bandwidth are not important issues with asynchronous discussion forums.

For years educators have been looking for ways to promote classroom community. Discussion boards provide a simple way for students and teachers to interact—and best of all, this learning community can be accessed from home and is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. These are not the hectic chat rooms that can often resemble the frenetic floor of the New York Stock Exchange. The discussion board is an asynchronous site, where students read and respond to ideas from teachers and fellow students.

For the past year I have watched the tools for distance learning bring my on-campus students closer together. During the first few days of every semester, I enroll students in a password-secured, online environment that allows them to communicate asynchronously—anytime day or night. And every student can gain Internet access, most from home and a few from the library or computer lab. Nearly everyone takes to it immediately.

Teachers' options in this arena are rapidly expanding. Our college uses the Blackboard platform for distance learning, but there are many others. Most offer free trial periods—e.g., WebCt and eCollege. Some faculty create MOOs or use existing online listservs. Norton sells a package that allows students to purchase a year's access to an online classroom, controlled by the teacher, for around $20 (less than the cost of most textbooks). So whether one's college subscribes to an online platform or not, almost anyone can create an online discussion board for students.

It seems reasonable, with any online assignment, to ask this question first: Will this medium allow me to do something better than I now do it in a traditional classroom? The answer is a resounding, yes! I have observed for years that many students, excellent in every other way, find it difficult to respond in a classroom setting. This fact has not stopped my attempts at classroom discussions, but I have seen the online discussion board give these reluctant students an outlet that allows them time to communicate in a more considered, thoughtful, meaningful way.

For example, discussion forums have had a big impact on my philosophy classes. I have replaced one of our required papers with a semester-long series of questions to the discussion board—posting a new set of questions every two or three weeks. Students are given time to respond to these questions about the philosophers and ideas we are currently studying and to the remarks posted by their peers (required). These discussion board exchanges are almost always more interesting, thorough, and thoughtful than the typical classroom responses. Frankly, I have been "blown over" by some of the insightful responses of students who appeared too timid to provide more than a ten-word response in the classroom. It has changed my evaluation process. I now have new insights into my students' critical thinking skills.

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Another advantage of the discussion board is that it is an ideal place for discovery writing across all disciplines, the kind of writing-to-learn effort where students tend to show less concern about correctness and to focus more on the ideas they are trying to communicate. Online, when students make mistakes in matters of form, no one gets too upset—the focus is on the ideas. Participation in a discussion forum seems to contribute to an attitude of trust among the participants.

That is why I consider this the best of both worlds: While we strive to make each class a lively and significant learning experience, we can add a layer of communication and response that was not easy to access before. On our community college campus, where many students often commute 25 to 30 miles each way, the online community is a powerful new ally.

I sometimes think nostalgically of the 500-mile automobile trips we took on two-lane roads to grandma's house in the 1950s. I still make that trip to my mother's house, but I seldom take the two-lane road. The expressway works better most of the time. We may soon look back on some of our twentieth century teaching methods with the same nostalgia, but if the new information highway becomes the road of choice, it will do so because it works better than the old roads.

The discussion forum is a road that takes me places I never traveled before—and I like what I see. I offer three practical suggestions for asynchronous discussion forums:

1. Establish guidelines that clearly state dates and times that each project and each response must be posted. Give ample time to respond.
2. Make students' contributions—postings and responses to postings—a significant part of the course grade. But do not just add this on top of an already full schedule.
3. Establish a clearly defined penalty for any posting not submitted on time—because late postings will affect the opportunities for others in the class to respond in a timely fashion.

Ideas for Discussion-Board Activities

Last spring, about 25 percent of our faculty voluntarily attended a workshop devoted to the use of discussion forums across the curriculum. A few of the potential discussion-board activities generated in that workshop are listed here.

1. We learn best what we can teach. The same holds true for our students. The discussion board can provide an opportunity to have students post a lesson that teaches others a key concept in the course: political theories, nursing procedures, grammar rules, math solutions, etc. The discussion board is also a good place to have other students reply to and evaluate their peers' lessons.
2. Post early drafts of all papers for peer review. This works best if the teacher provides a very specific rubric to guide the peer review—one that requires more than "yes" or "no" answers. (If your campus has a writing center, these drafts can be available to trained writing tutors instantly.)
3. Post a question of the week (or day). After each class or after each week, students may be assigned to post a response such as, "What I learned this week (today) and things about which I am still not clear." This assignment can require classmates to try clarifying information for their peers. The instructor can review this site while planning the next day's or week's classes.
4. The instructor can post a problem to the forum and have students solve it, then have other students critique their peers' solutions.
5. Post a controversial argument. Have half of the class refute the argument and the other half refute the first half's response.
6. Post a topic and use the discussion board as a site for students to brainstorm ideas related to the assignment by making lists, clustering ideas, listing useful Internet links, etc.
7. Conduct a debate or a trial online: assign students to a position for the debate or assign some to prosecute and others to defend.

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